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THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS AND FAVORITE STORIES

DICKENS AND HIS CHARACTERS. BY "PHIZ"

CLEARTYPE EDITION

THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS

BY

EVERETT H. RUPERT

AND

FAVORITE STORIES

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LIFE OF DICKENS

CHAPTER I

A CHILD IS BORN

SHORTLY before midnight on February 7th, 1812, an age-old crisis was awaited in a modest home at Landport, Portsea, England. A young woman was about to present her husband with a second child.

Preparations for the event had been simple and scant. True, the village doctor, summoned post-haste to officiate at the occasion, and doubtless grumbling at the inconsiderate hours which most infants choose for making their entrance into the world, had already arrived on the scene, dripping with the night-fog through which he had lighted his way over the slippery cobbles with a candle-lantern, but bristling with a sense of his vast importance, and determined to do his level best. And in 1812 a doctor's level best was little enough. At that time, methods of sanitation and medical care were still crude and uncertain; and being born, no less than giving birth, was a much more precarious business than it is today.

In this instance, however, Nature was kind; for blending with the midnight chimes there sounded the first weak wail of a new-born infant whose heart was destined to speak to the heart of all humanity, whose immortal genius as a story-teller was to hold the whole world in its spell.

This child, christened John Charles Huffman, was the second child, but first son, born to John and Elizabeth Dickens. John Dickens was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office—a small job at small pay. He did his work well, and was liked and respected by his associates. But the Navy Pay Office offered little chance to get ahead. It scarcely answered the eternal question of how to make both ends meet. Clothes, fuel, rent, doctor-bills, presented griev-

ous and often unanswerable problems. And now, with the birth of his son Charles, there was another mouth to feed—a state of affairs serious enough to test the fitness and courage of the average man.

But apparently John Dickens did not stem from the breed of average men. Honest at heart, reliable and efficient in his humble job, he was a careless, happy-go-lucky sort, little given to lying awake nights worrying about where the next dollar was coming from. Life was hard enough anyway. Why go out looking for trouble? Time enough to mend affairs that needed mending after trouble caught up with him. Besides, John had "expectations." He didn't just know how they were going to materialize—but life couldn't go on beating him forever. Something was bound to turn up.

Something did. Another child. And another. More hungry mouths to feed, bodies to clothe—and ever-mounting doctor-bills and rent to meet. He drew too freely on his credit, and presently found himself staggering under a growing mountain of debt. Dire poverty, hunger, want, stared the Dickens family in the face—but John stared right back, grinning cheerfully. He admitted things looked bad, but they couldn't last. Better days were ahead. Something was bound to turn up.

And, strangely enough, as if to justify his faith in the goodness of things in general, the Lords of the Admiralty transferred him to London, where his fortunes momentarily improved. But just as suddenly he was sent to a post in Chatham, and it was the old story all over again—only worse. The wolf snarled a little louder, closer; the growing Dickens family tightened its belt a little tighter. The wife and mother, Elizabeth Dickens, seems to have endured the family misfortunes with as much patience and good nature as could have been expected. If the case was otherwise, it has failed to get into the record. At any rate, the husband and father continued to smile cheerfully at their manifold troubles, and to assure his flock that "we 'll get ourselves out of this mess yet."

It was while the Dickens family resided at Chatham that the boy Charles began to emerge, sharp and clear, from the shadows which enveloped his earliest years. According to his own account,

written long afterward, he was frail and sickly as a child, unable to join in the rough games of the neighborhood boys. Marbles, peg-top and prisoner's base were about his limit, and he did not shine in any of them.

Such formal schooling as he got during his early childhood was little better than no schooling at all. His tired, over-worked mother taught him his letters, and later the rudiments of English and a little Latin. After he learned to read, the biggest event in his young life was the discovery of some dusty, dog-eared old books which his father had collected through the years, and which had lain long neglected in the attic of the house in Chatham.

Among these books, young Charles found "Robinson Crusoe," "Tom Jones," "Roderick Random," "Humphrey Clinker," "Peregrine Pickle," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "The Arabian Nights," "Tales of the Genii," "Don Quixote," "Gil Blas," and certain volumes of Voyages and Travels. While the lustier boys of the neighborhood played their rough games, the lad pored over these marvelous books by the hour. They stirred his sensitive soul, kindled his imagination. He read and re-read them, until he almost knew them by heart.

In later years, he described the famous characters which trouped from the pages of these precious volumes as "a glorious host to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time—and did me no harm. For whatever harm was in them was not there for me; I knew nothing of it. When I think of it, the picture always rises in my mind of a summer evening, the boys at play in the churchyard, and I sitting on my bed, reading as if for life. Every barn in the neighborhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them."

As a result of this passionate reading, the youngster began to make up stories of his own—the first hint of a talent which, when he came to man's estate, was to captivate and thrill millions of eager readers the world over. It was at about this time, too, that he began to display other unusual capabilities. He recited pieces and sang comic songs uncommonly well; and his proud

parents, as proud parents are wont to do, took advantage of every opportunity to mount their precocious son on a table-top where he could "show off" to unoffending visitors who were expected to admire and applaud him, and who apparently had the good sense to do both, whatever their secret feelings in the matter may have been.

During the last two years of the family residence at Chatham, when Charles, now a dark-eyed, curly-headed youngster, was eight or nine years old, he attended a school kept by a young Baptist minister named William Giles. This was an important period in the unfolding life of the future novelist. The schooling itself, if of any value, was only incidentally so. More important was the fact that the schoolmaster liked the boy, understood his sensitive nature, admired his keen intelligence, and encouraged his passionate love of reading. Here the lad also got his first taste of theatricals, and became so enthused that he actually wrote a whole tragedy which bore the grandiloquent title: "Misnar, the Sultan of India."

Those were happy days—but the clouds were gathering, and a period of black misery lay just ahead. For some reason or other, the Lords of the Admiralty decided that the elder Dickens was again needed in London. So to London the family moved, taking a house in Bayham Street, one of the meanest, poorest parts of the town. The house itself was a small, ramshackle tenement; the neighborhood one of bleak poverty, human wretchedness and squalor. A washerwoman lived next door, a Bow Street officer lived over the way.

In the entire district there was not a single boy whom the sensitive Charles could have accepted as a playmate. His own room was a miserable garret overlooking a damp, malodorous court. Here there were no lessons to be learned except the lessons of neglect and poverty. In this atmosphere his body seemed imprisoned, his soul warped with hopeless despair. Nobody seemed to care what became of him.

John Forster, the intimate friend and biographer of Dickens during his later life, throws some light upon the child's state of mind during this distressing period when he says: "Many times had he spoken to me of this, and how he seemed at once to fall into a solitary condition apart from all other boys of his own

age, and to sink into a neglected state at home which had always been unaccountable to him."

Meantime, in spite of the enforced move to London, the earnings of the elder Dickens did not advance by a single farthing; and with the increased costs of living in the city, the family hardships also increased. To make things more difficult, the family itself had grown more numerous. There were bills and more bills, which good John Dickens, try as he would, could not meet. They shifted from one shabby home to another, always dodging the sheriff, often hungry, never knowing a moment of security. Such a sordid drama could have but one ending. And it came, to add to the misery of poverty the bitter disgrace which overtook the family when poor John Dickens was imprisoned in the Marshalsea for debt.

For a time the mother made a pathetic attempt to keep her little flock housed and fed by selling the meager furniture a piece at a time. But at last nothing was left. Mrs. Dickens, with her younger children, joined the father in prison, while a humble lodging was found for Charles outside.

Yet through all this misery, for which he might easily have held the elder Dickens accountable, the boy Charles did not once waver in the deep affection and great admiration which he had for his father. He afterwards wrote:

"I know my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived in the world. Everything that I can remember of his conduct to his wife and children, or friends, in sickness or affliction, is beyond all praise. By me, as a sick child, he has watched many nights and days. He never undertook any business, charge or trust, that he did not zealously, conscientiously, punctually, honorably discharge. But in the ease of his temper and the straitness of his means, he appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all."

It is certain, however, that the tragedy which reached its terrible climax with his father's imprisonment, left the lad saddened and bewildered, and beginning to ask, even at his tender age, what life was all about. He must have spent many a miserable, lonely night, wetting with his tears the hard straw pallet in the wretched garret where he slept, wondering what he could do to

help his poor father and mother. But what could a mere child do?

Early each morning the lad came to the gloomy fortress where he waited patiently for the great gates to open, so that he might go in and get breakfast, such as it was, with his father and mother. And there he remained, occupying the long hours as best he could, until the gates were closed at night, when he crept back to the mean hovel where he slept.

It was during this dark interval that Charles, then ten years old, secured, through the good offices of a relative, his first employment in a blacking factory—a crazy, tumble-down old building squatting on the edge of the river, and literally overrun with rats.

"Its rotten floors and staircase," he wrote in after years, "and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellar, the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs . . . and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before me, as if I were there again."

The child's job was to paste labels on blacking-pots. The hours were long, the pay miserable—only six shillings a week—and the work pure drudgery. Three other boys, dragged from the London gutters and similarly engaged, were his only companions.

"No words," Dickens wrote, "can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship . . . and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast. The sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; the shame I felt in my position; the misery of it to my young heart . . . cannot be written."

Only a few minutes were allowed at noon for lunch—he was always hungry—and he sometimes squandered a part of his slender earnings for a four-penny plate of beef at a nearby cook-shop, or for a plate of bread and cheese at an old public house over the way.

A penny cottage loaf and a pennyworth of milk provided his breakfast, and secreted in a cupboard of the shabby garret chamber where he slept, he kept another small loaf and a quarter pound of cheese to make a supper on when he came back at night. Saturday, being pay-day, was the big day of the week; and Saturday night was always looked forward to as a great occasion, when he

could walk home with six shillings in his pocket—and on the way stop and look in at the confectioners' windows, and think what he might buy with his money, if he only dared spend a little of it.

Thus life ran month after month—days of ill-paid drudgery, in ugly surroundings that tortured his sensitive soul; nights of loneliness, heartache, a hopeless sense of abandoned neglect, for which, as he tells us, he had "no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support from anyone I can call to mind, so help me God. My rescue from this kind of existence," he says, "I considered quite hopeless . . . though I never, for one hour, was reconciled to it, or was otherwise than miserably unhappy. I felt keenly, however, the being so cut off from my parents, my brothers and sisters; and when my day's work was done, going home was such a miserable blank."

One can easily see why, when Dickens came to write *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist,* he did not have to draw upon his fertile imagination for material. He had only to call to memory the bitter struggle of his own childhood. So great indeed was his loneliness, so warm the ties which bound him to his unfortunate parents, that his entire Sundays were spent in the Marshalsea; and on one such visit, the restraints which he had hitherto managed to impose upon his emotions when in their presence, slipped beyond control, and he pleaded with his father to find some way to remove him from the squalid lodgings which he called home.

Dickens Senior was so deeply touched by his son's pitiful appeal that he wept, and promised the lad that he would move heaven and earth to find him a decent place in which to live. "He also told me," says Dickens, "to take warning by the Marshalsea, and to observe that if a man had twenty pounds a year and spent nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings and sixpence, he would be happy; but that a shilling spent the other way would make him wretched."

Charles never forgot the warning; but neither did his father forget his promise to secure for his son more desirable living quarters. John Dickens had a little money derived from a small pension, and this he now drew upon to pay for a back attic that overlooked a lumber yard. A mattress with some bedding was sent to this place, and a cot made up on the floor. There was a little

window, too, through which the boy could see the sky, and catch the clean scent of the lumber from the yard below. "And," he tells us, "when I took possession of my new abode, I thought it was a Paradise."

His landlord was a fat, good-natured, kind old gentleman who had a gentle, motherly old lady for a wife. They became very fond of the "orphan," as they called him; and one night when he became ill they hovered about his bed till morning, ministering to him with all possible patience and tenderness. Both these fine old people passed on a few years afterwards, but they still live as the Garlands in *The Old Curiosity Shop.*

Meantime, the unlucky father of Charles, languishing in the Marshalsea, sometimes wept tears of self-pity at the fate which had overtaken him; but for the most part he maintained his customary attitude of cheerfulness and hopeful calm. The imprisonment couldn't last forever. Something was bound to turn up. Such steadfast faith deserved to be rewarded; and since this is a story of real life and not fiction, it must be recorded as a fact that that faith *was* rewarded, and in the most unexpected and singular fashion. A relative found it convenient to die, and in doing so, left the elder Dickens a considerable sum of money.

There is no discoverable evidence that John Dickens was at all surprised at this sudden turn in his fortunes. Always hoping for the best, he took life as it came, the good with the bad, and the money which had been left to him, he took in the same spirit. The legacy came at an opportune time, when he was most in need of it. With a portion of it he paid his debts, and so bought himself out of prison.

Thus life began anew for the Dickens family; and from that hour onward, until Charles himself wrote of it in after years, no member of the family ever made the slightest allusion to the bitter, humiliating experience through which they had passed. From temporary lodgings in Little College Street, they moved to a respectable small house in Somerstown. Dickens Senior, still smarting from the sharp lesson he had learned during his imprisonment, conserved his new-found resources carefully, and set about it diligently to find some profitable employment for his talents. But, be it said to his eternal credit, his first act on his release was

to remove Charles from the blacking factory and have him placed in school.

This great good fortune made young Charles deliriously happy, and filled his heart with gratitude to his father. The school selected was Wellington House Academy, and there the boy, now twelve years of age, remained for nearly two years. Long afterward, one of his school-fellows recollected him as "small but well-built, with a more than unusual flow of spirits inducing to harmless fun, seldom if ever to mischief. I cannot recall anything that then indicated he would thereafter become a literary celebrity." Another remembered him as "a handsome, curly-headed lad, full of animation and animal spirits." All who knew him at school recalled his flashing smile, his exceptional intelligence and charm, and his enormous popularity with school-mates and masters alike.

The two years spent at Wellington House were, as he himself afterwards revealed, the happiest, most care-free years of his boyhood life. It was really a fine school, well-staffed with competent masters who knew how to direct, without repressing, the healthy exuberance of their youthful charges.

It was at this time that the boy took to writing small tales for the amusement of his school-fellows. He also began to develop a passionate devotion to theatricals, and soon became the leading spirit in these affairs. The boys got up gorgeous scenery, and Charles led them in the performance of plays like *Miller and his Men* and *Cherry and Fair Star,* which were presented with great solemnity and no little success. On one occasion, where the plot called for the blowing up of a mill, young Dickens contrived matters in such realistic fashion that he brought the police down upon their heads.

When nothing better offered, Charles induced his companions to join him in dressing up like beggar boys. As such they would sally forth into the streets, accost nice old ladies, and ask for money. That the impudence was resented by his would-be victims did not rob Charles of the huge enjoyment which he derived from this prostitution of his talents.

But even the best of good times have to end sooner or later. The education of Charles Dickens, so far as formal schooling was concerned, came to a close when, at fourteen, he took employ-

ment as a clerk in an attorney's office. But the hardships, deprivations and sufferings of his childhood had not been in vain. Later they were to furnish him with first-hand material for the greatest novels mortal man ever penned. If one would see into the heart and soul and mind of Charles Dickens as a child, he has only to turn to the immortal pages of *David Copperfield*.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILD GROWS UP

THE duties of the clerkship which young Dickens now held resembled those of a modern office boy, rather than those of the articled clerk who looks to the law for a career, and who pays his employer for legal training. But simple as his duties were, his employer, Mr. Edward Blackmore, called him "a clever youth," and was quick to acknowledge that the boy was industrious and did his work well.

The situation was a fortunate one for Charles in more ways than one. He had advanced his earnings to thirty shillings a week. He now had a real home to return to at night, and leisure for such amusements as appealed to him, as well as spending money. He felt that at last he was getting on in the world—a fact which made him both happy and proud.

It was also in the office of Mr. Edward Blackmore that Dickens gained that deep contempt for legal chicanery, and his bitter hatred of the tyranny and injustice of the law, which he was to exhibit in a number of his future books. Here, as in all his adventures with life, he was accumulating material for stories destined to bring him fame and fortune as the greatest novelist of his time.

During the two years he spent in the attorney's office, Dickens took advantage of every opportunity to gratify his unconquerable love of theatricals. Keenly aware of his own histrionic ability, the conviction was growing in him that the one thing he wanted above everything else was to achieve greatness as an actor.

This lofty ambition was encouraged by a fellow-clerk, Potter

by name, who was similarly inclined. Together, night after night, they attended the lurid plays at London's cheap and popular theatres; haunted the stage-doors, and sometimes actually succeeded in getting themselves engaged for minor parts. But as time went on, other interests and necessities intervened, and the youth was obliged to forego the enchantments of a world of make-believe for the more realistic business of getting ahead.

It seems that Dickens Senior, with that amazing versatility and self-confidence so characteristic of the man, had demonstrated his capacity for a "come-back" by mastering the art of shorthand. More than that, he had got himself a job as reporter for a London newspaper, where he acquitted himself so well that he was assigned permanently to the press gallery of the House of Commons.

Young Dickens was so deeply impressed by his father's miraculous rise in the world, that he decided to become a shorthand reporter himself. He went at it with a zeal and determination that could have only one result. He failed, at first try, to match his father's illustrious achievement of winning an assignment to the House of Commons, but he did find employment as a reporter in Doctors' Commons where the country's most famous divorce and probate cases were tried. More priceless material for the future novelist, though he was wholly unaware of it at the time.

The young man, then eighteen years of age, held his job as reporter at Doctor's Commons for about a year. During that period he made many friends, improved his social standing, and was frequently entertained at the homes of nice people. Thus he walked squarely into another crisis in his life. He fell madly, hopelessly, in love with Maria Beadnell, daughter of a wealthy banker.

Maria was a bewitching minx, attractive enough to turn any youngster's head. And apparently she was flattered by his attentions, since she encouraged them. But proud papa Beadnell said no. "Who was this young upstart, anyway, to come courting his daughter?" He must put an end to it. He did.

The emotional storm through which Charles passed during that romantic episode was later described with dramatic vividness in *David Copperfield*. He simply changed the real-life name of Maria

Beadnell to the fictional name of Dora Spenlow, and reported his feelings through the character of David.

The cruel rebuff he met at the hands of the elder Beadnells, because his social status was a cut below their own, could not fail to wound deeply a nature as sensitive and honest as Charles Dickens possessed. That the frivolous Maria did not and never could have merited a love as passionate and sincere as Dickens offered her, is beside the point. The boy suffered. The affair broke his heart, and for a time plunged him into the very depths of agonized despair.

But youth is resilient. At nineteen, even a broken heart will mend. And Dickens, driven by necessity, plunged doggedly into other interests and pastimes, and eventually conquered the passion that had threatened to "eat out his life." Among other things, he improved the shining moments at the British Museum, where he read and studied everything under the sun that he conceived might at some time be useful to him.

At the same time, the lure of the theatre, now more powerful than ever, returned to grip his imagination and set his soul on fire. The stage fascinated him. Night after night, for a long time, "the play was the thing," and where the play was, there Charles Dickens was certain to be found. The old ambition to carve out a career for himself as an actor not only would not die, but developed into a ravenous emotional hunger which nothing but a stage career could satisfy.

He practiced incessantly in his spare time—even such simple things as walking in and out of a room, sitting down, gesturing, making faces at himself in the glass—always striving for the greatest dramatic effectiveness. He not only haunted the theatre, but he observed and remembered the tricks and mannerisms of the actors he admired. He studied diligently and practiced hard to perfect himself in the roles that attracted him. He was profoundly impressed with the acting of the elder Mathews, one of the celebrated thespians of the time, and being a good mimic, could perform in the Mathews manner with striking fidelity to the original.

Finally, thoroughly tired of the drudgery and low pay which came from his job as a shorthand reporter at Doctors' Commons,

he decided to cut loose, once and for all, and realize his life's greatest ambition.

As a first step, he wrote to Bartley, the stage manager at Covent Garden, applying for a job at that theatre. In his letter he frankly told Bartley how young he was, exactly what he thought he could do, that he had a strong perception of character, and a natural power of reproducing in his own person what he observed in others. In short, he wanted to be an actor, and he felt that he might become a good one if given a chance.

Bartley, perhaps out of admiration for the youth's audacity, promptly acknowledged the letter; but being in the middle of a new production, suggested a delay, and promised to communicate with Dickens again in a fortnight. Bartley kept his promise. His second letter invited the aspirant to appear at the theatre on a certain day, and do anything he pleased before himself and Charles Kemble.

Dickens was so elated he could hardly wait for the great day to arrive. But when the hour struck, the lad was laid up with a painful earache, aggravated by a heavy cold. So he wrote Bartley a letter of explanaton and apology, adding that he would renew his application the following season.

But Dickens never renewed his application. Shortly thereafter he got his first job as a reporter on a newspaper—*The Chronicle*—at five guineas a week; and before many months passed had begun to write those pieces which were speedily to win him distinction as an author, and forever turn his mind from the stage as a career.

Thus does Fate play her queer pranks with human aspirations. A trivial accident—and the whole course of a man's destiny is changed. For there can be no question that a mere earache deprived the world of a great actor. No one who, in later years, saw and heard Dickens when he appeared on the platform in dramatic renderings of his own works, could doubt that his flair for acting amounted to real genius.

But now his work on *The Chronicle* was to open up new fields of interest and activity; and talents which had long lain fallow were to be brought into play. As a newspaper reporter, Dickens achieved instant and amazing success. He also found it a school

of exciting adventure which he reveled in. For the life of a newspaper reporter in London during the 1830's was undoubtedly at times a hazardous pursuit. Many years later, in the course of an address, he told his listeners:

"I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren here can form no adequate conception. I have transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour.

"I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been belated on miry by-roads forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken post-boys, and have got back in time for publication. There never was anybody connected with newspapers who, in the same space of time, had so much express and post-chaise experience as I.

"I have had to charge for half a dozen breakdowns in half a dozen times as many miles. I have had to charge for the damage to a great-coat from the drippings of a blazing wax-candle, in writing through the smallest hours of the night in a swift-flying carriage and pair. I have had to charge for all sorts of breakages fifty times in a journey, as a result of the pace we went at. I have charged for broken hats, broken luggage, broken chaises, broken harness—everything but a broken head, which is the only thing they would have grumbled to pay for."

When young Dickens went out to get a story, he got it, regardless. On one occasion in Devon, he took down an election speech in the midst of a free-for-all fight staged by a mob of local ruffians, and under such pelting rain that he had to press into service two bystanders, who held a pocket-handkerchief over his notebook like a canopy.

But it was all good training, and he often harked back to his newspaper experience as the real foundation of his later success. It was, in fact, his reportorial experience on *The Chronicle* that that opened to him the door of literary opportunity. His work had

taken him into every quarter of the city, high and low. He had met, mingled with, and made friends of men, women and children of every class and kind. He saw everything and forgot nothing. The complicated pattern of life, its color and variety, fascinated him. And presently he began to toy with the idea of writing down his impressions in the form of brief sketches which, he dared hope, others might like to read.

He began to experiment, writing fragmentary pieces of one kind and another in his spare time. Encouraged by the promise which he saw in these first literary efforts, he started writing stories in dead earnest. And eventually turned out one called *A Dinner at Poplar Walk,* which he posted, with fear and trembling, in a letter box up a dark court in Fleet Street, to the *Old Monthly Magazine.*

He himself has described the emotions which overwhelmed him when at length he saw his story in all the glory of print. "On which occasion," he says, "I walked down to Westminster Hall and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street and were not fit to be seen there." He then learned, to his great disappointment, that he would have to take his pay in glory alone, since the magazine was in financial distress. But almost immediately fortune again smiled on the young author and opened another door to fame.

The Morning Chronicle for which he worked decided to issue an evening edition; and Dickens arranged with the editor, Mr. George Hogarth, to publish in the evening paper a series of sketches which Dickens proposed to write, and for which he was to receive extra pay. Thus Charles Dickens, now twenty-one, was launched upon the career which he was to follow for the remainder of his life. Nine sketches, which were to become famous as the *Sketches by Boz,* followed in rapid succession, and were subsequently issued in two volumes illustrated by the celebrated artist, George Cruikshank.

Dickens had adopted the pen-name of "Boz" because he was not sure of the reception which the public would give his writings. But he needn't have worried. No one has ever described the features and habits of Londoners, or the city's wandering streets

and queer corners, with such clear insight, such keen wit, as Dickens has done. The Sketches picture ordinary people in ordinary surroundings doing ordinary things—but enlivened by the shrewd observation and trenchant humor of Dickens, they make far from ordinary reading. The young man himself got no end of fun out of writing them, which perhaps explains why all lovers of Dickens find them so delightfully amusing today.

Many years later Dickens spoke of the influence which his work as a newspaper reporter had on his entire career. He said: "To the wholesome training of severe newspaper work, when I was a very young man, I constantly refer my first successes." And his friend and biographer, John Forster, reminds us that Dickens's work as a reporter "opened to him a wide and varied range of experience, which his wonderful observation, exact as it was humorous, made entirely his own. He saw the last of the old coaching days, and of the old inns that were a part of them; but it will be long before the readers of his living pages see the last of the life of either."

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE AND SUCCESS

If any doubt lingered in the mind of Charles Dickens as to what he most wanted and was best fitted to do, that doubt was completely dispelled by the popular acclaim which greeted his *Sketches by Boz*. And a benign destiny was right at his elbow to spur him on to other and greater triumphs.

He again fell in love. Hard. And not merely with one girl, but with three, all at one and the same time. It happened in this manner:

Mr. George Hogarth, with whom Dickens worked on *The Morning Chronicle,* had a tremendous admiration for the brilliant young writer, and the two speedily became fast friends. As a result, Dickens was eventually invited to Mr. Hogarth's home, where he was warmly welcomed, and where he met for the first time Mr. Hogarth's three charming daughters—Catherine, who

was twenty, Mary, who was sixteen, and Georgiana, who was a little younger. Each girl was so beautiful, so utterly enchanting, that Dickens promptly fell head-over-heels in love with all of them. And they, from all accounts, were as completely captivated as he.

But for a stupid law which allowed a man only one wife at a time, the entranced Charles would have married all three of them instantly. Nor is there any evidence to prove that they would have quarreled with such an arrangement. But compelled to make a choice, Dickens finally chose Catherine, the eldest.

In those days, the youth of the contracting parties, and the economic hazards involved, offered no serious obstacles to matrimony. Unless thwarted by parental opposition, young people who decided to marry simply scurried off to the parson and got married. And Charles and Catherine followed the fashion. After a glorious honeymoon in Kent, the newly-weds set themselves up in housekeeping at Furnival's Inn—and another milestone was passed—another chapter in the amazing chronicle of Charles Dickens was begun.

His literary activities, briefly interrupted by his marriage, now took a new and auspicious turn. Unknown to them, while Dickens and his beautiful bride were exploring the first delights of marriage, a comic artist, named Robert Seymour, paid a visit to his publishers, Chapman and Hall. He "would like," he said, "to do a series of cockney sporting plates," similar but superior to a series of his drawings previously published by that house. The new drawings, the artist said, were to illustrate the misadventures of the Nimrod Club, whose members were to go shooting, fishing, and so on, and get into difficulties for their want of dexterity.

Mr. Chapman was agreeable provided a suitable story, as a vehicle for the drawings, could be found. Dickens, still at the peak of public popularity for his delightful *Sketches by Boz,* was invited to provide the story. When the proposition was explained to him, however, he protested that Seymour's idea was outworn, that it was better for the illustrations to rise naturally out of the text, and being no sportsman himself, preferred to take his own way, with a free range of English scenes and peoples. His views being deferred to, he was instructed to proceed with the story.

Thus the immortal *Pickwick* was born. And thus the foundations were laid for a subsequent charge of plagiarism which caused Dickens no little distress. The charge was brought by the widow of Robert Seymour, the artist, who illustrated only the first two serial-issues of Pickwick, and then, for some unknown reason, committed suicide. The widow contended that Seymour was the real creator of Pickwick, and that Dickens had stolen the idea. She even put in a claim for legal compensation.

The contention fell flat, however, in the face of evidence from a number of sources. Dickens himself indignantly denied that Mr. Seymour had originated or even suggested a single incident, character (except the sporting instinct of Mr. Winkle), name, phrase or word of *The Pickwick Papers*.

As for the character of Pickwick, it was further shown that Seymour's original idea for the leading character was sketched as a long, thin man. The Pickwick which sprang from the brain of Dickens was "a fat old beau who would wear, in spite of the ladies' protests, drab tights and black gaiters." Actually the character was drawn to the life from that of his closest friend, and afterwards his official biographer, John Forster. When this was revealed, the likeness became immediately obvious; and since Dickens made Pickwick a rather ridiculous figure, Forster became the butt of no end of merriment among their friends.

All this, however, in no way affected the triumphant success of *The Pickwick Papers*. A young artist named Hablot Browne, who signed himself "Phiz," had succeeded Seymour as illustrator, and he made a capital job of it. The rollicking humor of the story, enhanced by Browne's corking illustrations, set the whole world roaring with laughter, and literally took London by storm.

On the streets, in untold numbers of homes, clubs and counting houses, the comical misadventures of Mr. Pickwick and his merry companions were almost the sole topic of animated discussion. Pickwick hats, coats and canes appeared in the shops like magic. Pickwick cigars, Pickwick gaiters, Pickwick umbrellas became all the rage. If the London of that day could have boasted of a Tin Pan Alley, doubtless Pickwick songs would have been whistled and sung to death in every tavern, theatre and back-parlour in town.

Oh, it was a great day for Pickwick! A great day for Dickens!

Never had the brain of man conceived such delightfully-ludicrous characters, nor entangled them in such uproarously-funny situations. Readers laughed till they cried. And since the story first ran as a serial, they could hardly wait till the next installment appeared. Lord Campbell, Chief Justice of England, said he would rather have written Pickwick than be Chief Justice and a peer of Parliament. Then there is the oft-told tale of the old gentleman who, reading the weekly installments of the story on his death-bed, thanked God for the likelihood of living until the next number of Pickwick came out.

The hilarious humor of *The Pickwick Papers,* the strange doings of its quaint characters, held for readers an irresistible fascination which has not waned a particle from that day to this. Who, having met them, can ever forget that great gallery of immortals —Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Snodgrass, that heartless rascal, Mr. Alfred Jingle, Mr. Winkle, Mr. Wardle, Mr. Wardle's lovelorn maiden aunt, Rachel, Mr. Tracy Tupman, Mr. Perker, the sharp lawyer, and that delightfully important, irrepressible personage, Sam Weller, first discovered polishing boots at the White Hart Inn? And what manner of man is he who could resist the charms of those vivacious young ladies at Dingley Dell? Mr. Pickwick and his companions certainly couldn't.

Curiously enough, the constantly ascending scale of delicious fun in *The Pickwick Papers* finally achieves a climax of majestic pathos in the trial, conviction and imprisonment of Mr. Pickwick for breach-of-promise. Here the author's childhood impressions of the old Marshalsea, etched forever on his memory, stood him in good stead, as it was to do again and again in novels as yet unwritten.

The tremendous success of *The Pickwick Papers,* which was as enthusiastically received in America as on the continent, firmly established Charles Dickens as a writer. The profits to his publishers exceeded £20,000; and Dickens himself received no less than £2,500 for the serial numbers alone, as well as a generous share in the copyright.

Thus, at a single stroke, the young author had sky-rocketed to the Olympic heights of money and fame. The only other thing he had needed to make him supremely happy, his wife, Catherine,

had, in the meantime, already given him—a son—Charles Dickens, Junior.

But apparently the gods decided that they had overstepped themselves in their benevolence. For an event occurred during the run of *The Pickwick Papers* perfectly designed to dull the edge of any triumph which Dickens had, up to that time, enjoyed. Mary Hogarth, who had come to live with Charles and Catherine —beautiful, laughter-loving, blithe-spirited Mary—almost as close to the heart of Dickens as Catherine herself—died. This death, which seemed so needless, so cruel, so sad, was a terrible blow to Dickens, and for a time he was desolate. Her epitaph, which he wrote, remains upon a gravestone in the cemetery at Kensal Green to this day. It reads: "Young, beautiful, and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen." But in the heart of Charles Dickens, Mary Hogarth did not, could not, die. She lived in his heart, in his dreams, always.

With *Pickwick* behind him, the world at his feet, and Destiny beckoning him onward to new and greater triumphs, Dickens occupied himself with the plot, scenes and characters which were to be welded together in his next book. But first he bought a comfortable home for his father and mother and saw them securely settled in it. For himself and Catherine he acquired a charming summer cottage at Twickenham, where friends and relatives without end gathered to enjoy the liberal bounty which his generous nature loved to bestow. He widened his circle of acquaintances among the great and near-great, and cemented more firmly the intimate friendship with John Forster which was to remain steadfast throughout his life. And in the fullness of time, Catherine presented him with a daughter, whom they christened Mary. What more could a man want?

During the run of *Pickwick,* Dickens had accepted the editorship of a new monthly magazine called *Bentley's Miscellany,* and it was in that publication that his new novel, *Oliver Twist,* first appeared as a serial, illustrated by the talented George Cruikshank. The close association between the celebrated author and, in his own field, the scarcely less celebrated Cruikshank, developed into a friendship during the run of *Oliver Twist* that lasted for many years.

An example of the loyalty of that friendship, on the part of Dickens, found dramatic expression when the Royal Academy refused to recognize Cruikshank's drawings, and actually excluded them from its walls, because his works were not produced in certain materials and did not occupy a certain space at its annual shows.

Dickens, commenting with biting sarcasm on this absurdity, predicted that many of those whose oils and brushes were acceptable to the Academy would have shrunk into the profoundest obscurity when the pencil marks of Cruikshank would still be fresh in half the home of the land. And, as time has proved, Dickens was right.

Strangely enough, however, long after Dickens was dead, Cruikshank, then an old man, made the same charge of plagiarism that had previously been made by the widow of Robert Seymour. Cruikshank claimed that he had originated the character of Fagin, the Jew, and the outstanding personage, next to Oliver himself, of the book *Oliver Twist*.

George Cruikshank was undoubtedly one of the world's greatest "comic artists." And, as Stephen Leacock has pointed out in his marvelous biography, "Charles Dickens, His Life and Work" —"Cruikshank had already made a name for himself by his depiction of city types of humble life. If he didn't invent Fagin, he at least could have. His claim was that he had told Dickens about a certain Jew, a receiver of stolen goods, and had not only described him but had given him a sort of pantomime depiction of him."

John Forster naturally dismissed Cruikshank's claim as preposterous. On the other hand, Dickens himself, in letters and elsewhere, often refers to "discussions" he had with various artists, and of plans for illustrations for his books, both before and during the time the stories were written. And no one who is familiar with Cruikshank's wonderful drawings can doubt that he knew the London underworld and its types quite as well as Dickens did.

Whether Cruikshank did or did not suggest the character of Fagin, the marvelous illustrations he provided for *Oliver Twist* and other Dickens novels are more than sufficient to secure his

fame in the heart and mind of posterity, without detracting in any way from the genius of Dickens. Each contributed to the success of the other, and a grateful world gives due credit to both.

Oliver Twist became, and remains, one of the most popular of Dickens's works. Its appeal to the heart is irresistible. Who can follow without a qualm the fortunes of the child Oliver, caught in the merciless grip of evil, squalor and vice—battling his way single-handed against the vicious cunning, the remorseless savagery, of the criminal underworld! Where is the heart so cold that it will not warm to that mysterious girl, Nancy—one of the strangest blends of good and evil ever brought to life in the pages of a book! Who will not loathe and despise that scurvy old wretch, Fagin, instructor of thieves, one of the vilest creatures ever hatched in the sewers of crime! What soul so brave that it will not shudder with horror when confronted by that gastly murderer, Bill Sikes! Yet there is humor in the book, too, and pathos, and excitement. The story marches; and its great success when first published simply added to the steadily increasing stature of Dickens as a novelist.

In addition to *Oliver Twist,* and his daily editorial tasks for *Bentley's,* Dickens produced the *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* and *Sketches of Young Couples,* both of which appeared in due course in *Bentley's Miscellany.* He had, indeed, a prodigious capacity for work that was amazing to men of less will-power and physical energy. Dickens himself often complained of the cruel "slavery" to which his various writing-tasks condemned him. And slavery it undoubtedly was, but it was a slavery that he imposed upon himself. Even so, he somehow found time from his manifold labors to ride, take long walks into the country and converse with friends. Real weariness, in those days, he apparently never knew.

He did take time out for a brief tour of the continent; and having formed quite an attachment for the youthful artist, Hablot Browne (Phiz), who had done so well with Pickwick, he dragged that gifted young man along with him. He had, in fact, formed the habit of dragging Browne about with him everywhere. He did this partly because he delighted in the youth's companionship, and partly because he forsaw that the latter's keen observation and skillful hand would prove a priceless future asset as "an inter-

preter in line" of the scenes and characters which Dickens wished to record.

On their return to London, and preparatory to the writing of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby,* the author took Browne with him on a journey into Yorkshire, where Dickens studied, and Browne so realistically illustrated, the frightful evils and cruelties of the English boarding-school system of that day.

For weeks they traveled about the country under assumed names, visiting the private schools, pretending that Dickens was looking for a school suitable for his small son. The schoolmasters put on their best manners when their visitors were around; but Dickens contrived to be close by on many occasions when the schoolmasters were not aware of it. Thus he stored in his memory all those appalling details of cruelty and gross incompetence which he later pictured so vividly in the book. The nation was so shocked and angered at the dreadful evils he disclosed, that measures were speedily taken to bring about permanent reforms.

It was in this book that Dickens brought to life that ignorant braggart and bullying schoolmaster, Mr. Wackford Squeers. He put his own mother into the story in the person of Mrs. Nicholas Nickleby. Here one also meets the pitiable half-wit, Smike; the delightful Mr. Vincent Crummles and his traveling theatrical company; the generous, kind-hearted Cheeryble brothers; that grotesquely comical creature, Newman Noggs, and Ralph Nickleby, as consummate a villain as ever drew breath. Dickens also took advantage of the opportunities presented in this novel to paint a vivid picture of the senseless bickerings of family life.

Nicholas Nickleby had been successfully launched as a serial when Dickens's third child, Kate Macready Dickens, was born; and shortly thereafter Charles moved his growing family into a beautiful home on Devonshire Terrace. It was here that *Master Humphrey's Clock,* first written as a short story, was developed into the full length novel known today as *The Old Curiosity Shop.*

This is sometimes called a novel without a hero—though that beloved vagabond, Dick Swiveller, is enshrined as a hero in the affections of millions of readers of this book. Among other unforgettable characters are the delightful Marchioness, and the

villainous Quilp. But it is the heroine—a mere child—who tugs at the heartstrings. Her name, as the whole world knows, is Little Nell, "whose simple, pathetic story has touched more hearts than the most polished romance ever written." Certainly more tears have been shed over this novel than over any story that Dickens wrote.

Barnaby Ruage, the next of the novels to come from Dickens's pen, is a tale of murder enveloped in a black fog of mystery. But it is also much more than that. It is a vivid picture of a period of human savagery, when violent emotions were unleashed on the slightest pretext, a state of mind and of hideous custom which, happily, our advancing civilization has left far behind. Walter Crotch, in his enthralling "Pageant of Dickens," says of the story:

"*Barnaby Rudge* is laid in a period when executions occurred weekly, and the populace were brutilized by their public character; when even young people were hanged for the most trivial thefts; when from every part of London swarmed a jostling crowd of every kind of rough and degraded character, spreading the contamination of vice and coarseness with every exhibition. . . Dickens's picture of the degradation of the common people, and the multiplicity of the criminal classes, gathers in intensity as the story proceeds until it culminates in the lurid horror of the burning of Newgate and the letting loose of the prisoners by the rioters." And "in the background . . . lurks the hunted outcast, Rudge"—in the depiction of whose character Dickens displayed to the full his genius for portraying the weird and the terrible.

On the completion of *Barnaby Rudge,* Dickens felt that he had earned a rest, and he took it. His growing literary fame had attracted an ever-widening circle of friends among the famous and important personages of the day. Among them were Macready, the actor, and Bulwer Lytton, the author, of whom he was particularly fond; and many were the festive dinners and entertainments enjoyed by Dickens and his congenial companions in his Devonshire Terrace home. And Catherine had, meanwhile, presented him with a fourth child, but second son—Walter Landor Dickens.

But a new magnet of irresistible power was beginning to draw

his fancy elsewhere. A far land, a new people, and the spirit of adventure beckoned. That land, that people, that promise of ad venture, were summed up in a single word—America.

CHAPTER IV

DICKENS VISITS AMERICA

The 3rd of January, 1842, found Charles Dickens and his wife Catherine, whom he now called Kate, aboard the steam packet *Britannia* bound from Liverpool to Boston. The children had been left in the care of Georgiana Hogarth, the youngest of the Hogarth sisters, who had entered the Dickens household shortly after her sister Mary's death.

Dickens was now thirty years old, with ten years of distinguished success as a writer behind him. He was described at that time as "a small, bright, and intelligent-looking young fellow with sparkling black eyes and a brisk, eager manner. He had put by a great deal of money. He was in excellent health. His good wife Kate, a little plump but still good-looking and of amiable disposition, was at his side. It was a great world to live in—a great time to be alive.

What he would find in America, how he would be received by its people, he did not know; but the longing for new scenes, new faces, and the hunger for adventure, were strong within him. He was to run full-tilt into adventure sooner than he had expected.

Three days out from Liverpool they ran into bad weather which speedily became worse, and continued worse throughout the remainder of the voyage. At times the storm raged with such violence that Dickens quite resigned himself to a watery grave. The days were dark, the nights fearful. The vessel, beaten and battered by the fury of the gale, staggered, stopped, shivered and plunged onward through the mountainous seas like a monster goaded into madness. "There were hours," he wrote later, "when we gave it up as a lost thing; and . . . waited quietly for the worst. I never expected to see the day again, and resigned myself

to God as well as I could. It was a great comfort to think of the earnest and devoted friends we had left behind, and to know that our darlings would not want."

A good deal of their time and energy seems to have been devoted to picking themselves off the floor, and of dodging the ship furnishings which were torn from their fastenings and hurled hither and thither with little regard for who might be in the way. In notes which he kept religiously from day to day, storm or no storm, Dickens recorded that in one instance "four dozen plates were broken at dinner," and one of the passengers "was blinded by lobster sauce, spilt over him by a steward." Again, in hours of comparative calm, when a few of the hardier passengers undertook to play whist, they were obliged, he says, to put the tricks in their pockets to keep them from disappearing altogether; and five or six times in the course of every rubber, the players were flung from their seats, rolled out at different doors, and kept on rolling until they were picked up by the stewards.

To add to the confusion, the ship's cook got drunk, one of the stewards fell down the cabin stairs, severely injuring his foot, and another steward fell on top of him and cut his eye open. The baker was taken ill and so was the pastry-cook; and to bring matters to a perfect conclusion, the ship ran aground just off Halifax. "For half an hour," he says, "we were throwing up rockets, burning blue lights, and firing signals of distress, all of which remained unanswered." With the coming of dawn, however, they learned, to their unspeakable relief, that they had simply run into a mud bank, and with the ebb of the tide the vessel got off, and shortly thereafter made a safe landing at Halifax.

The stay at Halifax was brief; but news of the presence of the famous author on board having been carried ashore, a public official presented himself at the packet, dragged Dickens off to meet the Governor, and sent his wife down with a carriage for Catherine, who was laid up with a horribly swollen face. The Dickenses got a great reception in Halifax from the great host of officers, judges, bishops, and lawmakers who assembled to do the distinguished pair the highest honors.

But it was on their arrival at Boston on January 28th that Charles Dickens got his first real taste of American hospitality.

No foreign celebrity ever received such a welcome. From the moment he landed at Boston until he sailed for home five months later, his life was an endless succession of balls, dinners, and receptions of all kinds.

In Boston the people simply went wild over him. Cheering throngs lined the streets whenever he appeared. If he went out in a carriage, great crowds immediately surrounded it and went along as an escort. When he went to the theatre, the whole house rose as one man and gave him an ovation that made the rafters ring.

Flowers, verses, letters of congratulation and of welcome poured in upon him in an unending stream. He was obliged to engage a secretary to help him handle the great piles of correspondence, and receive the endless procession of visitors who wanted to shake his hand. Moreover, in the midst of all this excitement, he somehow managed to sit for a portrait and a bust.

Nothing like such a reception had ever been seen in America. The most distinguished persons in the nation went to extraordinary lengths to do him honor. Deputations from the Far West—from the lakes, the rivers, the back-woods, the log houses, the factories, cities, villages and towns—came more than 2,000 miles to extend their greeting. Enthusiastic letters of welcome came from the governors and the leading authorities of almost every state. There were special invitations from the universities, from the U. S. Senate and House of Representatives, from public and private bodies of every kind.

At a great public dinner in Boston, where plates were priced at $15.00 each, the vast assembly included the nation's leading lights of culture and learning. Among them were Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Bancroft, the historian, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Professor Felton (on whom Dickens later modeled the character of Mr. Bevan in *Martin Chuzzlewit*), Jared Sparks, Doctor Channing, Ticknor, James Russell Lowell, Josiah Quincy, then President of Harvard, Richard Henry Dana, author of "Two Years Before the Mast," and many others.

The same exuberant welcome awaited him in Worcester, where, much to his astonishment, he arrived all in one piece after jolting for seventy-five miles in a shabby rattle-trap railway coach drawn

by a snorting, shrieking, wood-burning locomotive. Then came Springfield, Hartford, New Haven and New York, each greeting him in the same turbulent, warm-hearted fashion.

In New York City there were a hundred and fifty persons on the reception committee, which included the most famous names in America. At a conference of leading citizens, at which the Mayor presided, it was resolved "That in the opinion of this meeting, it is proper and becoming in the citizens of New York to unite heartily in these demonstrations of respect and esteem which have been, and will be, everywhere in our land called forth by the visit of Mr. Dickens to America; not because of his talents alone, but in consideration of the noble use he has made of those talents, in indicating the rights and claims and feelings of humanity at large, without distinction of rank or circumstances."

A grand full-dress ball in the famous visitor's honor was given at the Park Theatre. There was space for 3,000 dancers, but so dense was the crowd that no one could dance. The elaborate decorations included garlands and special floral pieces from every state in the Union. There were grand marches, quadrilles, and tableaux representing famous scenes from Dickens's books. One newspaper described it as "the greatest affair of modern times, the fullest libation ever poured upon the altar of the muses." A writer on another paper remarked that "if he does not get his head turned by all this, I shall wonder at it."

At a magnificent banquet (one of many which followed) the eminent author was the guest of the most notable figures in the city's life. Among them were Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, W. B. Astor, Hamilton Fish, Doctor Channing, who had come down from Boston especially for the occasion, James Fenimore Cooper, Agassiz, the famous naturalist, Nathaniel Hawthorne, N. P. Willis, and Edgar Allan Poe. It was an unparalleled tribute to genius expressed in ringing speeches, toasts and songs. Washington Irving rose to make a few remarks, and was so overcome with emotion that he broke down in tears. As Doctor Channing wrote to Dickens the next day: "It is no nonsense, and no common feeling. It is all heart. There never was, and never will be, such a triumph."

The sound of trumpets and drums had preceded the arrival of

Dickens at Philadelphia, where elaborate preparations for his entertainment had been made. But by this time the celebrated Englishman was so worn with the constant round of receptions, banquets, balls, parades, *et cetera,* that he sought seclusion and rest in his hotel room. This program was defeated, however, by a local newspaper which had erroneously published the statement that "Mr. Dickens will, we understand, be gratified to shake hands with his friends between the hours of half-past ten and half-past eleven o'clock." So when the mob which had gathered outside the United States Hotel was notified of the refusal of Dickens to see them, such a howl of angry protest rose that the landlord prevailed upon Dickens to receive them as the only means of avoiding a riot. Whereupon the weary but good-natured Dickens stood for more than two hours, shaking hands with a seemingly endless procession of people.

The same enthusiastic welcome awaited him in Washington where he was received by President Tyler, warmly greeted by John Quincy Adams, Webster, Clay, Preston, Calhoun and other national leaders, and invited onto the floor of both houses of Congress. Daniel Webster told the American people that Dickens had done more already to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen that Great Britain had sent into Parliament

"Of the fervency and universality of the welcome," John Forster tells us, "there could be no doubt. . . . The sources of Dickens's popularity in England were, in truth, multiplied many times in America. The hearty, cordial and humane side of his genius had fascinated them. . . . The cheerful temper that had given new beauty to the commonest forms of life, the abounding humor which had added largely to all innocent enjoyment . . . had made Dickens the object everywhere of grateful admiration, for the most part of personal affection."

That Dickens was thrilled to the depths of his soul, and deeply grateful there can also be no doubt. In a letter to a friend, he said: "I can give you no conception of my welcome here. There never was a king or emperor upon earth so cheered and followed by crowds and entertained in public at splendid balls and dinners and waited upon by public bodies and deputations of all kinds."

And a little later, recording his impressions of the American people: "They are friendly, earnest, hospitable, kind, frank . . . warm-hearted, fervent, and enthusiastic . . . and when they conceive a perfect affection for a man, are entirely devoted to him."

The price Dickens paid for this universal adulation was an unutterable weariness of body and mind which clung to him during the remainder of his stay in America. His letters to England dwelt upon this weariness with increasing frequency. In one of them he says:

"I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere where I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see. If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair. . . . If I go to a party in the evening, I am so inclosed and hemmed about by people, stand where I will, that I am exhausted for want of air. I dine out, and have to talk about everything to everybody. I go to church for quiet, and there is a violent rush to the neighborhood of the pew I sit in. . . . I take my seat in a railroad car, and the very conductor won't leave me alone. I get out at a station, and can't drink a glass of water without having a hundred people looking down my throat. . . . This man is offended because I won't live in his house; and that man is thoroughly disgusted because I won't go out more than four times in one evening. I have no rest or peace, and am in a perpetual worry."

Other factors were intruding to disturb his serenity—factors destined to alter completely his first favorable impression of America. One of these was a deep and growing resentment at the public's utter indifference to his plea for a just and equable international copyright arrangement for the protection of British authors in the American market.

In those days, it was the easy custom of American publishers to bring out editions of British books without even the formality of "by your leave." And as for the payment of money to the authors from whose works they thus profited—it simply wasn't being done.

This was a sore point with Dickens, and again and again, in his public speeches, he harped on the subject. The author, he vigorously contended—even a British author—should be honestly

and fully recompensed for his labors. He was speaking not only for himself, but for all members of his craft who were similarly exploited. It was a situation that, in all justice, called for a remedy.

"There must be an international arrangement in this respect," he asserted. "England has done her part: and I am confident that the time is not far distant when America will do hers."

No one today questions the justice of the cause for which Dickens pleaded. But in 1842 it didn't go over. The reactions of the public ranged all the way from apathetic disinterest to outright hostility. The publishers and booksellers were, of course, in the forefront of this opposition. Even those who agreed with Dickens in principle were inclined to regard the time as ill-chosen on the part of the nation's guest for the advancement of such highly controversial ideas. Some of his closest friends warned him in the kindliest spirit to stay off the subject in his public addresses; but he either could not or would not do so; and as the country remained cold to his copyright proposals, Dickens's admiration for the American people began to cool.

Another thing that soured him against America was the national tolerance of slavery—still a flourishing institution in the United States in 1842. Stories of the frightful barbarities allegedly practiced by American slave owners had reached Dickens in England. These stories had filled him with unspeakable horror, and part of his expressed mission in America was to learn whether the tales were true. But he also brought with him a point of view already warped by prejudice, so that in imagination, at least, his worst fears were verified even before he had examined the evidence.

His first encounter with the "foul disgrace" of slavery was at Washington, where he was served at his meals and waited upon by negro servants. He was so angered by this display of "enforced human degradation" that he could scarcely contain himself. Later, as he proceeded farther west and south, he actually saw "niggers sold down the river"—a sight that so outraged his simplest concept of humanity that every fibre of his being rose in revolt, and aggravated in great degree his growing disgust of all things American.

But Dickens hadn't seen America yet. His disgust and disap-

pointment grew as he penetrated farther and farther into the hinterland. It should be remembered, however, that at this period the country west of the Alleghenies was still a howling wilderness. Here, even the genteel poor were missing. The inhabitants were, for the most part, illiterate, crude in their manners, shiftless, lawless and, in the eyes of Dickens, a thoroughly bad lot. Roads were abominable. Methods of travel by horseback, coach and canal-boat, were slow and uncertain, and utterly lacking in privacy, convenience or comfort. To make matters worse, Mrs. Dickens was ill throughout much of the western journey, and Charles himself was fighting a heavy cold. But Dickens had come to America to see America, and in spite of the hardships encountered, was determined to see it through.

From Richmond, which they reached by rail, they proceeded by coach to Harrisburg, and thence westward by canal-boat and river-steamer to Cincinnati, Louisville, Cairo and St. Louis. At the latter city—in those days the last outpost of American civilization—a grand "soiree" was held in their honor at the Planters' House, but events of that sort had long since lost all their fascination for Dickens.

More alluring was a side trip to see the famous "Looking-glass Prairie," more accurately described by the natives thereabouts as Black Hollow. It was, in fact, a noisome, fever-breeding swamp of "stagnant, slimy, rotten, filthy water." To Dickens, that was the ultimate in disillusionment.

The return journey was made with all possible speed by a somewhat different route which took them to Buffalo, Niagara, and points in Canada before they again reached New York, eager to sail for home.

The real significance, to Dickens, of his first visit to America—the thousand and one vivid impressions of the country, its people, its institutions, its typically national and sectional characteristics, which the distinguished British author carried away in his memory—have been little more than hinted at in these pages. But Dickens himself later recorded his impressions fully in his *American Notes*—a highly interesting and colorful narrative.

At the time, however, Dickens was thoroughly fed up with America. The last letter he wrote before his departure was the

yearning cry of a lost spirit whose one prayer is: "Oh, God, take me home—home—HOME!"

On June 7th, 1842, Mr. and Mrs. Dickens embarked for Liverpool on the sailing ship *George Washington,* and after an uneventful voyage of twenty-three days, landed at Liverpool July 1st. They proceeded immediately to London.

CHAPTER V

RESTLESS YEARS

The reunion of Charles and Catherine with their children was a rapturous one; and for some days thereafter the house at Devonshire Terrace was the scene of many gatherings of friends who called to welcome the wanderers home. Slowly the threads of the old life were taken up again. Early in August the family fled the heat of London for Broadstairs, a quiet little watering-place, where they were accustomed to spend their summers.

Here Dickens plunged into the writing of his *American Notes.* On its completion he predicted, and rightly, that the book would offend many shades of American opinion, for he had not only expressed his high opinion of what was best in America, but also his contempt for the worst in that land.

"I know perfectly well," he said, "that there is in America, as in most other places laid down in the maps of the great world, a numerous class of persons so tenderly and delicately constituted that they cannot bear the truth in any form."

At the same time, he assured his American readers that he was not actuated by any spirit of malice or ill-will. Any such attitude, he said, would be wholly inconsistent with his grateful and enduring recollection of the welcome which he had found awaiting him beyond the Atlantic.

The *Notes,* however, roused a storm of indignant protest in America, and among the less intelligent and less cultured left wounds which it took a long time to heal.

With his *American Notes* out of the way, Dickens set to work

on his next novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Says G. K. Chesterton: "He poured into this book genius that might make mountains laugh, invention that juggled with the stars." Dickens himself considered it immeasurably the finest tale he had yet written. The intricacies of the plot are somewhat hard to follow, but no Dickens-lover cares a fig about that.

Here is a novel written in the best Dickens manner—a story of love and heroism, of hate and black treachery, of murder and a terrible retribution which overtakes the murderer. It is melodrama, satire and nationalistic propaganda all rolled into one.

The story teems with characters as diverse in their nature as they are skillfully drawn. Here we meet, among others, the hideous Jonas Chuzzlewit, the bibulous Sairey Gamp, the kindly Mr. Bevan, Betsy Prig, "a fair specimen of a hospital nurse," Mark Tapley, Tom Pinch, Mould, the undertaker, and that sleek, smiling, crawling abomination, Pecksniff. As Chesterton has pointed out, there is nothing finer in rascaldom than the ruin of Pecksniff at the very moment when the oily hypocrite believes himself to be achieving his masterpiece of villainy.

Especially enjoyable to modern readers are the scenes laid in the miasmal swamp-regions of frontier America. As may be imagined, this second realistic picture of American character and background at their worst, following hard on the heels of the *American Notes*, brought a howl of rage from the United States when the novel was first published. But with the passage of time all this was forgiven and forgotten; and today, even in America, *Martin Chuzzlewit* ranks among the most popular of Dickens's works.

Before *Chuzzlewit* was completed, however, Dickens got the inspiration for a Christmas story which the whole world instantly took to its heart. A story that has since been read and re-read, laughed over and wept over. loved and enjoyed by countless millions of people. That has been adapted for recitation, played on the stage and the screen, and at least once a year is today an outstanding feature on the radio. Dickens called it simply *A Christmas Carol*.

Of all the stories that Dickens wrote, none reveals more clearly the great humanity reposing in his soul than *A Christmas Carol*.

None is so eternally fresh, none is cherished with such a warmth of affection by men, women and children alike.

When he wrote the *Carol,* Dickens cried. He lived it, and between scenes he stalked the London streets at night for miles, with Bob Cratchit, the creature of his own imagination, for a companion.

Who, while reading this famous story, has not wept at the sad plight of cheery, laughter-loving, crippled Tiny Tim! Who has not thrilled with joy at the marvelous transformation of the miser, Scrooge, and his regeneration on that bright Christmas morning when the pealing bells carried their message of joy, peace and good will to his reborn soul.

Says Stephen Leacock: "Literature has no finer picture than the redeemed Scrooge . . . waking to the ringing bells of a new world. It is a new world that is open to each of us at any moment . . . at the mere cost of opening the windows of the soul. It is of no consequence whether *A Christmas Carol* is true to life. It is better than life."

Lord Jeffrey, in a letter to the author, perfectly expressed the sentiments of all readers when he said: "You have done more good by this little publication, fostered more kindly feelings, and prompted more positive acts of beneficence than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals in Christendom." And the brilliant G. K. Chesterton has summed up the reason for the enduring popularity of the *Carol* in these words:

"The beauty and the real blessing of the story," he says, "do not lie in the mechanical plot of it, the repentance of Scrooge, probable or improbable; they lie in the great furnace of real happiness that glows through Scrooge and everything around him; that great furnace, the heart of Dickens. . . . The story sings from end to end like a happy man going home."

Small wonder that the world has long since pronounced *A Christmas Carol* the greatest Christmas story ever written.

The *Carol,* priced at only a shilling, was not a conspicuous financial success, though eventually sales climbed to a quarter of a million copies. Today its sale ranks third after *Pickwick* and *Copperfield.*

Disheartening financial difficulties with his publishers arose at

this time to color Dickens's outlook and fill his mind with imaginary fears for the future. The *Carol,* as a money maker, had not only proved a disappointment, but *Martin Chuzzlewit* also, at first, achieved nothing like the phenomenal success he had expected. For some mysterious reason the book failed to catch on at once. Then, as now, potential best-sellers sometimes failed at first to excite much attention. *Chuzzlewit* was that kind of book. It was to become a best-seller in time, but neither Dickens nor his publishers were yet aware of it.

The apparent failure of *Chuzzlewit* filled him with foreboding. Though he had made a great deal of money from his writings, it was very certain that his literary labors had enriched others far more than himself; and while he had not been extravagant in his mode of living, he began to question the future and wonder whether his capacity to earn would be sufficient to meet his ever-increasing domestic needs.

These fears, which he exaggerated, interfered with his work; and there were days, as he bitterly confessed, when he could not produce a single word. He was to encounter these distressing periods of sterility many times during the coming years—intervals of blank nothingness all too-familiar to every creative writer. But the fountain was not dry. His over-tired brain simply needed a vacation in which to rest and recuperate. Travel again offered itself as the pleasantest solution to his difficulties; and accompanied by his wife, her sister Georgiana, the children, three maids, and a "brave courier," he left London for the Continent on July 1st, 1884.

The party traveled leisurely across France in a tremendous coach with four horses and a postillion, brought over from England especially for the journey. And apparently it was a gay time they all had of it. Their nights were spent in quaint wayside inns, and they frequently interrupted their travels to stroll the streets and visit the points of interest in the picturesque towns and villages through which they passed.

They arrived at Marseilles on the 14th, tired but gloriously happy. The next day found them "steaming out in the open sea" toward Genoa, whence they drove to the suburb of Albaro where a house, the Villa Bagnerello, had been taken.

There they remained until the end of September, but except for copious note-taking and planning, Dickens did no actual creative work. Most of his time was spent in rambling through the village and about the countryside He was interested in everything and missed nothing. Every street, lane and bypath, every monastery, chapel and tavern, every hill, woodland and valley were explored with the thoroughgoing eagerness of an antiquarian. He even learned Italian, conversed with the people, and observed their habits and customs in the minutest detail. Free to indulge his fancies unfettered by worry, he got exactly what he wanted—a season of delightful recreation and rest.

The previous January, Catherine had presented him with a fifth child, christened Francis Jeffrey; and with so many children to look after, the lives of both parents were blessed by the presence of the much-loved Georgiana, who played nurse to the little ones as devotedly as though they were her own.

The winter was spent in Genoa; and there Dickens wrote *The Chimes*—the second of the famous Christmas stories which were to become known as the Christmas "annuals." Before their return to England, Dickens and his wife toured Southern Italy, visiting Naples, Rome, Florence, Venice, and other points of interest. The family also sojourned for some time in Switzerland.

The fruit of his travels abroad was a volume which he entitled *Pictures from Italy*. But the tourist today will search its pages in vain for the Italy described in the guide books. The material is, rather, as Dickens himself calls it. a "series of reflections" on what he observed, felt, and experienced during his travels abroad —which was certainly a great deal more than the average tourist today sees, feels and experiences during his travels anywhere.

These "reflections" are, for the most part, intimately personal and delightfully gay. Even the desolate grandeur of the ruins at Rome were unable to dampen his ardent spirits, or quench his thirst for new and astonishing experience. Only once does a somber note creep into his narrative, and that is where he describes the execution of an Italian murderer under the guillotine. Dickens witnessed the event with his own eyes, and the gruesome picture he has given of it is a masterpiece in the literature of horror.

On their return from Italy in 1845, the house at Devonshire Terrace had been reopened, and in October of that year their sixth child, Alfred Tennyson Dickens, was born. Meantime *The Chimes* had been published and was well received, selling 20,000 copies in a very short time. In this, as in all his Christmas stories, Dickens arouses the better instincts, touched the finer qualities, in all of us. No writer ever felt so keenly, or knew how to express so well, the simple romance of childhood at its lovliest and best. The child Meg quickly worms her way into the warmest recesses of our hearts; and the child-like Trotty Veck ticket-porter of the wind-swept church, is not far behind. The writing of its third part caused Dickens so much emotional agitation that he had to have himself locked in his study to compel himself to finish it.

For Dickens the following few years were to be marked by tremendous literary activity and seething mental and physical unrest. During this time he was in great demand as a contributor by the various magazines of his day, and his output of fiction and topical articles was prodigious.

Christmas, 1845, saw the publication of *The Cricket On the Hearth,* which the author described as A Fairy Tale of Home. The Cricket will be long loved and remembered as the little household god which remained silent when there was strife and dissension in the home. In this story appear those famous characters, Caleb Plummer and his blind daughter Bertha, Mr. Tackleton, the toy-merchant, the astounding Mrs. Peerybingle who, in a great emergency, got a baby from nowhere by some kind of magic —nobody knew just how; and the vivacious Miss Slowboy who had a rare and surprising talent for getting this same infant into all kinds of trouble. Throughout the story, of course, is the wonderful Christmas spirit which Dickens knew so well how to impart.

In order to supply the vast and increasing demands which editors and publishers made upon his talents at this time, Dickens worked with furious industry, sparing himself not at all. In addition to all these labors he accepted the editorship of a new paper called the *Daily News,* which first appeared in January, 1846. His position was that of editor-in-chief, and his salary £2,000 a year. He sat in the editor's chair exactly one week—then put on

his hat and walked out. He had found that the manifold duties of his job left him no time or energy for anything else.

His abrupt resignation, however, was simply a symptom of the growing restlessness which was to mark his outlook and his activities for a long time to come. He was apparently unable to tie himself down, or stay in one spot long. Brighton and back again. Broadstairs and back again. Periods of creative sterility which interfered with his writing. For hours at night he walked the silent streets of London wrestling with his literary problems—with his discontent.

It was during this period that amateur theatricals again began to engage his interest. He joined a group of friends in the organization of a dramatic society, and threw himself into rehearsals and performances with great enthusiasm and energy. They presented Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor,* in which Dickens scored a huge success as Captain Bobadil. Plays by Beaumont and Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* followed. Packed houses greeted every performance. And the receipts, which were given to charity, ran high. Dickens loved to act. He *could* act. And he fairly reveled in these theatrical activities.

But he continued his writing. There were periods of feverish industry when he turned out enormous quantities of copy at top speed. He found distraction in the company of his friends and entertained frequently at Devonshire Terrace. He took flying trips abroad, sometimes alone, sometimes taking his wife along for company. On one occasion he dragged Catherine off to Scotland, where he received a tumultuous welcome, and later presided as chairman at the grand opening of the Glasglow Athenaeum

Thus the months sped by. For Christmas, 1846, he wrote *The Battle of Life,* a story little known today, but very popular at the time it appeared. On April 18th, 1847, the seventh child, Sydney Smith Dickens, was born

By this time, Dickens was deep in *Dombey and Son,* which took the greater part of two years to write. The book was begun in Switzerland, where the author's restless spirit had taken him for the summer, was continued in Paris, and completed in London. It was published in April, 1848.

The story, which was illustrated by Phiz, was an instant and

complete success. In *Dombey and Son,* Dickens returns to his first love—the beauty and pathos of childhood. In none of his writings is his rare understanding and deep sympathy for childhood more perfectly expressed. *Dombey and Son* is the tragic tale of a delicate and sensitive boy crushed by the brutal selfishness of his father, but the things that linger longest in the reader's memory are the tenderly drawn pictures of Little Paul and the unutterable pathos of his death.

Thackeray, after reading one of the earlier instalments, carried it to his publisher, slammed it down on his desk, and cried out in despair: "There is no writing against such power as this—one has no chance!" Lord Jeffrey wrote: "I cried and sobbed over it last night, and again and again this morning." And there is considerable evidence to support the belief that Jeffrey had plenty of company.

It is in this novel that the scoundrel Carker plays so prominent a part; and during its publication as a serial, one man is said to have traveled several miles at midnight to awaken a friend with the great and welcome news that "Carker's dead!" Then there is the oft-told tale of the landlord whose lodgers were so concerned about the fate of the various characters in the novel, that they eagerly subscribed to a Tea at which the landlord read aloud the successive instalments of the story as they came out on the first Monday of every month.

The sale of the book was enormous. In the first six months alone it brought Dickens £2,200, and his fears for his financial future were definitely at an end. That summer (1848) he wrote *The Haunted Man,* one of his "annuals" which appeared the following Christmas. And on January 16th, 1849, the eighth child, Henry Fielding Dickens, came along. In more ways than one, Dickens seemed to be doing pretty well.

CHAPTER VI

THE CLOUDS GATHER

CHARLES DICKENS was now 37 years old and rapidly approaching the peak of his career. He had long planned writing his autobiography, and from time to time had worked on the earlier chapters. But self-revelation, he had found, was not easy. To bare to the world his very soul—to reveal the degrading poverty, the shameful neglect, the hopeless misery that had embittered his childhood days—called for more courage than he possessed, and the venture had finally been abandoned.

Now, when he least expected it, inspiration came to his aid with a complete solution to the problem. He conceived the happy notion of casting his life-story in fiction form. The idea fascinated him, and he set to work at once (January 3, 1849) drawing up the plot, roughing out the principal scenes, and introducing his leading characters.

The first manuscript page bore the queer title, "Mag's Diversions," and its hero, successively christened Trotfield, Trotbury, Copperboy and Copperstone, finally emerged with the now world-famous name—*David Copperfield.* The general plan of the book well in hand, Dickens plunged into the actual writing; and from that time onward until its completion two years later, the story was as much a part of him as his breathing or his appetite.

During those two years, Dickens divided his home-life between his seaside residence at Broadstairs and Devonshire Terrace in town. But his restive spirit could not long endure the monotony of any one environment. "Perhaps there never was a man," says Forster, "who changed places so much and habits so little." That first summer, for example, he lugged his family and his *Copperfield* off to the Isle of Wight; and during the months that followed, week-end excursions to Brighton and other vacation resorts were not infrequent.

On one such holiday an incident occurred which revealed Dickens in a new and rather astonishing role. Among the several

artists who illustrated his books, John Leech, who had illustrated the *Carol* and other Christmas stories, was a great favorite with Dickens. Leech, Dickens often said, had been the very first English artist to discover that there were pretty girls in England, and had made beauty a part of his art.

On the Brighton holiday referred to, Dickens had included Mr. and Mrs. Leech in the family party; and one day while in bathing, Leech was struck on the head by a great wave and knocked unconscious. For several days the artist was in a dangerous condition with what was diagnosed as "congestion of the brain." He suffered continuously from terrible pains in the head, which ice-packs, bleeding and other known remedies of the time did little to relieve.

The holiday ended, Dickens was anxious to get back to the city and his work; but, as he wrote to a friend: "My plans are all unsettled by Leech's illness; as of course I do not like to leave this place while I can be of any service to him and his good little wife."

Dickens remained at the invalid's bedside day and night; and at last Leech's state became so alarming that Dickens proposed to Mrs. Leech that he (Dickens) be permitted to try his hand at mesmerism—otherwise known as "magnetic healing." Mrs. Leech was dubious about the results but desperate enough to try anything. So "in the middle of the night," wrote Dickens, "I fell to; and after a very fatiguing bout of it, put him to sleep for an hour and thirty-five minutes. A change came on in the sleep, and he was decidedly better." Mrs. Leech was astounded; and Dickens was so elated with this discovery of hitherto unsuspected powers, that in a letter reporting the artist's complete recovery, he wrote: "What do you think of my setting up in the magnetic line with a large brass plate? Terms, 25 guineas per nap."

David Copperfield, now generally considered the greatest of the Dickens novels, appeared late in the year 1850, and immediately surpassed in popularity all his previous works excepting *Pickwick*. The reasons for its tremendous success are clear. The boy David *is* Dickens. While writing its closing scenes, he had written to John Forster (October 21, 1850):

"I am within three pages of the shore, and am strangely divid-

ed, as is usual in such cases, between sorrow and joy. Oh, my dear Forster, if I were to say half of what *Copperfield* makes me feel tonight, how strangely, even to you, I should be turned inside out! I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World."

He had done exactly that. In telling David's life-story, Dickens had simply told his own life-story. Through his hero he had projected the very essence of his own spirit, his own personality. And it is of "soul stuff" such as this that great novels are made.

John Forster found another reason to account for the supreme popularity of *Copperfield*. He said of the story: "It can hardly have had a reader, man or lad, who did not discover that he was something of a Copperfield himself. Childhood and youth live again for all of us in its marvelous boy-experiences."

Enthralling as the story is, the plot of *David Copperfield* is of comparatively little importance. It is the character of David, and the characters of the other persons as they are revealed by the continual clash of opposing forces in the story, that grip and hold the reader's interest through every paragraph, page and chapter of this famous book.

Dickens went directly to life for many of these characters—men and women whose names are now as familiar to most of us as our own. He put his own father into the book as Mr. Micawber, "the greatest comic figure in English literature since Falstaff"—and almost the most tragic. And who can doubt that the bewitching Dora Spenlow with whom David falls so madly, so hopelessly in love, was any other than the Maria Beadnell of the author's first youthful and tragic romance?

Idealized? Of course. Art does not copy. It creates. Dickens, the supreme artist, took the clay of reality and moulded it to suit his needs. That is why the characters which throng the pages of Dickens's novels live and breathe, and *seem* to behave as human beings do.

Observe, in *David Copperfield,* the eccentric Betsy Trotwood, the faithful Peggottys and their little Emily, the cruel Murdstone, the brilliant, handsome James Steerforth, the bully Creakle, Barkis, who was "always willin'," the crafty Uriah Heep, poor, thwarted Agnes Wickfield and her no-account father, the cheerful

half-wit Mr. Dick, and that strange, elf-like creature, Miss Mowcher. These are not puppets but real people. As Mr. G. K. Chesterton, writing of *David Copperfield,* says:

"He has created creatures who cling to us and tyrannize over us, creatures whom we would not forget if we could, creatures whom we could not forget if we would, creatures who are more actual than the man who made them."

If, as is sometimes charged, the story is over-sentimental—if, in the onward rush of the action, the turn of events sometimes hinges on incidents that strain our credulity—the modern reader can still pick up *David Copperfield* and find it a welcome relief from the so-called hard-boiled realism of our day.

When Dickens finished a book, he put it completely out of his mind. The terrific strain of many months of creative effort invariably left him in a state of mental and physical exhaustion. He *had* to forget—and to aid the process he now followed his usual program: he sought distraction in the company of his friends. Visits, dinners, receptions, a veritable whirlwind of activities followed. He took brief journeys. He again plunged into amateur theatricals.

But the winter months found him back in harness working hard on plans for a new weekly periodical, *Household Words,* which was launched the following spring. Dickens retained a half share in the venture, and had himself appointed editor-in-chief at a salary of £500 a year. He surrounded himself with a staff of brilliant writers; went out of his way to encourage new talent. Among others who rose to fame under his guidance were George Eliot and Adelaide Anne Procter.

With its first issue, March 30th, 1850, *Household Words* leaped into popular favor; and with every successive issue circulation boomed, sales eventually reaching three-quarters of a million copies. Dickens put his whole heart and soul into the magazine —planning the entire editorial content, writing, editing, supervising the duties of his assistants and working with his contributors. From cover to cover, *Household Words* bore the unmistakable stamp of his ideas, his personality, his high literary standards. His directing genius continued to shape the magazine's editorial policy during the remainder of his life.

These duties, together with his social and other interests, kept him busily occupied during the spring and early summer months. August was spent at Broadstairs, and there, on the 16th, his ninth child, Dora Annie Dickens, was born.

Following the return of the family to Devonshire Terrace in September, Dickens, as might be expected, again devoted much of his spare time to private theatricals. Rehearsals for a grand inaugural performance of Bulwer Lytton's new comedy, *Not so Bad as We Seem,* scheduled for the following spring, occupied much of the winter.

But the new year (1851) opened very unfavorably. Both Catherine and the new baby, Dora, were taken severely ill, and in March Dickens took them to country lodgings at Great Malverin. Georgiana accompanied them, the children being left in town.

After less than two weeks in the country, Dickens was summoned hastily to London by the grave illness of his father, who had been failing steadily in recent years. Charles arrived at his father's bedside late at night; but, as he later wrote: "He did not know me. He began to sink at about noon . . . and never rallied afterwards. I remained there till he died—O so quietly . . . I hardly know what to do."

Ten days later, Dickens was again recalled to London to preside as chairman at a great public dinner given for the General Theatrical Fund. That night, in his appeal for aid to actors who were aged or in distress, Dickens made one of the finest speeches of his career. As he left the speaker's stand, the plaudits of the banqueters still ringing in his ears, he was handed a message which had been withheld from him until that moment. The message was from Great Malvern. It told him that his infant daughter, Dora, was dead.

These sad tidings, coming so close upon the death of his father, was a grievous blow to Dickens, but his heart remained forever closed on the subject, even in letters to his closest friends.

With the recovery of Catherine from her illness—though she was still far from well—life was resumed at Devonshire Terrace. Charles, always a driven man, naturally turned again to his favorite spare-time diversion—acting; and on May 16th the much-heralded Lytton comedy, *Not so Bad as We Seem,* was presented

before Queen Victoria, the Prince Consort and a large, fashionable audience. The play was a tremendous success, and Dickens covered himself with glory. The company afterwards toured the provinces, where they received a most enthusiastic reception. It was during this tour that Dickens first met Wilkie Collins, who was to become a close lifelong friend.

Summer again found the family at Broadstairs where the author's mind began to ferment plans for a new novel. As usual, while incubating a story, he grew increasingly restless. "I sit down . . . " he wrote, "to think of a new story, and, as it begins to grow, such a torment of desire to be anywhere but where I am, and to be going I don't know where, I don't care why, takes hold of me, that is like being *driven away*." The story now unfolding in his mind was *Bleak House*.

Late that year Dickens gave up Devonshire Terrace and bought Tavistock House in Tavistock Square. There in November he began writing *Bleak House*. But progress was slow. He suffered much at this time from nervousness and depression. There was a Christmas story for the forthcoming "annual" to write, and he hadn't even an idea as to what it would be about.

The following March 13th (1852), Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, the last of his ten children, was born.

At about the same time the first serial installment of *Bleak House* appeared in *Household Words*. But Dickens was getting nowhere with the story as a whole. Writing—any kind of writing—had become increasingly difficult. The magazine's weekly requirements ate up copy almost faster than it could be produced. His editorial duties, in addition to his other writings, aggravated his confusion.

Even the birth of his last son was apparently a source of profound irritation. In a letter written at the time to a Mr. Cerjat, he said that his wife was "quite well, after favoring me (I think I could have dispensed with the compliment) with No. 10." He wrote to John Forster: "Wild ideas are upon me of going to Paris —Rouen—Switzerland—somewhere—and writing the remaining two-thirds of the next No. [of *Bleak House*] aloft in some queer inn room."

But the season in these favorite retreats was still too cold for

comfort; so, early in the summer, he took his family to Dover for three months instead.

On their return to London late in October, Dickens took up the daily round of activities at about where he had left them. The writing of *Bleak House,* which he had continued at Dover, remained his best excuse for seeking diversion wherever he could find it as a relief from the grind of creative work. Among his happiest hours that winter were spent in organizing the first children's theatricals at Tavistock House.

In January of the new year (1853) he was guest of honor at a great banquet tendered him by the new Midland Institute at Birmingham, as a testimonial to his "varied literary acquirements, genial philosophy, and high moral teaching." The occasion was made memorable by an invitation, which Dickens accepted, to appear at Birmingham the following Christmas in public readings from his books. This first formal consent to read in public was to have a profound influence upon his later life.

Meanwhile he continued his work on *Bleak House,* his shorter writings and editorial duties for *Household Words,* and in addition had started dictating to Georgiana "A Child's History of England." All these manifold interests, together with time and effort devoted to the various charitable and other committees on which he served; the enormous hand-written correspondence (there were no typewriters then) which he handled daily; the invitations to feasts and festivals which he felt bound to attend—were sapping his energy an shattering his health.

The strain was beyond all reason or common sense. His home-life was in a state of continual turmoil. His own children drove him distracted. He was cracking, and knew it. He wrote Forster: "I really feel as if my head would split like a fired shell if I remained here [London]." In June he fled to Boulogne, "thanking Heaven for escape from a breakdown."

Bleak House was completed that summer. Financially the novel was a great success. If it failed to strike the popular note as truly as some of his other novels, it was because he had discarded for a time his familiar and pleasing role of romanticist to appear in the sterner and more difficult guise of a realist.

For *Bleak House* is a novel with a purpose. Dickens was vitally

concerned with the social problems of his day, and his passion for bettering the world found noble outlet in this book. The all too-common spectacle of a law-suit dragging from generation to generation, blasting human hopes and wrecking human lives, is one of the most sardonic themes in all literature.

The story opens with the Court of Chancery beginning its session under a chill, dark curtain of London fog. The preliminaries are quickly dispensed with. The case of Jarndyce vs Jarndyce gets under way. From that moment the story marches forward, as Stephen Leacock puts it, "with all the majesty and inevitability of Greek tragedy." It is a story of love and hate, of broken hearts and shattered lives; but through it all shines the beauty of renunciation more powerful than love itself. Moreover, Dickens founded the story on absolute fact. "Everything set forth in those pages concerning the Court of Chancery," he wrote, "is substantially true and within the truth."

But the characters which come to life in those pages will live long after the story itself is forgotten. The lovable John Jarndyce, the mysterious Tulkinghorn, the ill-fated Richard, the glorious Ada, the despicable Horace Skimpole, the unfortunate Esther, crazy Gridley, jolly Detective Bucket—all are as eternally alive, as unfailingly interesting, as on the day they sprang full-grown from the marvelous brain of their creator.

For many readers *Bleak House* ranks as the greatest of all Dickens's novels. Whatever its rank, the book fulfilled its noble purpose. The author's bitter attack on the law's delays, his exposure of the mockery of justice as administered by the courts of his time, helped enormously to bring about legal reforms which have extended down to the present day.

With *Bleak House* out of the way, Dickens pushed his *Child's History* to a quick conclusion. He wrote *Finis* to the latter in September; then, in October, celebrated the completion of both books by a two months' bachelor tour of Italy with Wilkie Collins and a Mr. Augustus Egg. This was the first time in his seventeen years of marriage that Dickens had taken a journey of any importance and had left Catherine behind. In mid-December he returned to London much rested, and started active preparations

for his public readings which were scheduled for Birmingham during the holidays.

The Birmingham engagement called for three appearances. On December 27th he was to read *A Christmas Carol,* on the 29th *The Cricket on the Hearth,* and on the 30th he was to repeat the *Carol.* His arrangement with the committee had provided that a section of the hall be reserved for working men at prices within their means. More than 6,000 people heard the readings, each of which occupied nearly three hours, and the ovation Dickens received at each appearance was tremendous. Receipts to the Institute ran between four and five hundred pounds.

The immediate result of the success at Birmingham was a flood of requests from other cities for similar readings by Dickens; but with the exception of two towns where he had previously pledged himself to appear, pressure of other work at the time made it impossible for him to accept. Nor did the suggestion, then made for the first time, that he give paid readings strike him favorably. "It is worth consideration," he wrote in answer to this proposal, "but I do not think there is anything in it." The seed had been planted, however, and in the days to come it was to bear golden fruit.

In January, 1854, Dickens buckled down to the writing of his next novel, *Hard Times.* He worked hard at it—too hard—much of the time in an emotional state bordering on hysteria, but driven by a savage determination to get it done. Meanwhile his *Child's History of England* was running as a serial in *Household Words.* Concerning the *Child's History,* Stephen Leacock says:

"It is now dead, but it deserves resurrection. It is almost forgotten, but it ought not to be. In some senses it is the most notable history of England that was ever written." Leacock suggests, however, that Dickens was much too outspoken in his descriptions of battles, executions, and other horrors to recommend the book as a manual for either nursery or school. "No purpose can be served," he goes on, "in inflicting such stories upon little children. No sensible parent would want to put them into children's hands. The effect is either to brutalize them into a love of cruelty, or to sadden them too soon with a sense of 'martyrdom of man.'"

Many adult readers, on the other hand, will find the book good reading. Certainly Dickens seems to have been the first popular historian of his time who dared to "debunk" history. Writing of King Henry the Eighth, for example, he takes the liberty of plainly calling that sovereign "one of the most detestable villains that ever drew breath . . . an intolerable ruffian, a disgrace to human nature, and a blot of blood and grease upon the history of England." In like manner he pays his respects to other infamous historical personages. In effect his attitude is: "The truth is going to be told no matter whom it hurts." And he tells it with a multitude of lively and colorful details.

Hard Times, which Dickens had hurled himself into with such relentless fury, was written in the incredibly short space of six months. He finished it, "three parts mad, and the fourth delirious," in mid-July at Boulogne. It ran as a serial in *Household Words* from April to August, 1854, and immediately thereafter appeared in book form.

Hard Times is generally regarded as the weakest, least interesting of all of Dickens's works. Dickens himself was disappointed in the story, though from a financial point of view the book did very well. A serial that could boost the circulation of a magazine one hundred per cent, as this novel did for *Household Words,* can scarcely be regarded as a failure. And when one considers the great physical and mental strain under which Dickens labored at that time, it is a miracle that the book got itself written at all.

Its merits as a story aside, the novel at least gave Dickens an opportunity, which he never failed to grasp, to wage relentless war upon wage-slavery, the blight of child-labor, crime-breeding slum conditions and other social and economic evils. These conditions he attributed bitterly to the selfishness and greed of those who created them; and it was in that mood that he wrote *Hard Times.*

The scene is laid in a typical manufacturing town where the bodies and souls of the workers are imprisoned in poverty, dirt and smoke. The plot is cumbersome, the action slow, but the characters are richly drawn. Looming large among them are Mr. Gradgrind, who orders his life and the lives of his family with mathematical precision, and Mr. Bounderby, the wealthy banker

—both of whom richly deserve all the hatred which they inspire in the reader of this book.

The moment *Hard Times* was finished, Dickens wrote Wilkie Collins that he was coming to London for a week of "amiable dissipation and unbounded license," and if Collins would breakfast with him "about midnight—anywhere—any day, and go to bed no more," he would "be delighted to have so vicious an associate."

Whether Dickens wrote those words in jest or in earnest, they are the cry of a weary soul too long imprisoned, reveling in the glorious ecstasy of escape.

But turbulent times lay ahead for Charles Dickens. Already dark clouds were gathering on the horizon, and in the fullness of time the storm would break.

CHAPTER VII

CATASTROPHE

With the passing years, the charms of Broadstairs as a summer residence had been gradually supplanted in the mind of Dickens by the gayer atmosphere of the Continent; and after his week of "dissipation" in London, following the completion of *Bleak House,* he returned to Boulogne where he had established his family for the summer. But he did little writing. He read, romped with his children, who worshiped him, and spent endless hours in delightful conversation with his bosom friend, Wilkie Collins, who had joined him.

In October the family returned to London, where Dickens devoted the winter months to his editorial duties, and to writing articles and stories for *Household Words.* His Christmas story that year was *The Story of Richard Doubledick.* He organized on a grand scale the second year's children's theatricals at Tavistock House. He gave public readings for charity at Reading, Sherborne and Bradford; and was again importuned to read publicly for pay. One hundred pounds was offered for a single appearance. But Dickens declined. He feared that, from a popular viewpoint,

such a project might impair his standing as a writer—a risk he felt he could not afford to take.

At this time occurred an episode that upset his life completely, and was destined to haunt his memory to the end of his days.

Early in January, without the slightest warning, Dickens received a letter from Maria. Maria! After twenty-two years! Maria—the girl who had inspired his first mad passion—who had broken his young heart—who had laid his life desolate.

But let's go back a little, as Charles Dickens certainly did when this ghost of a long-lost love returned to awaken long-buried memories. It will be recalled that when Charles, at eighteen, had fallen victim to the charms of the distractingly beautiful Maria Beadnell, she had encouraged his suit until the purse-proud elder Beadnell had put his foot down.

But the affair had not terminated as abruptly as her father had supposed. Charles and Maria corresponded for some time thereafter, and the letters Charles wrote were couched in the most impassioned terms, filled with endearments and vows of eternal devotion. Maria kept those letters, some of which have since been made public. In one of them, written apparently after the young woman had disclosed her heart's true indifference, the youthful Charles had written:

"I have no hopes to express, no wishes to communicate . . . I have been so long used to inward wretchedness and real misery that it matters little, very little, what others may think of or what may become of me.

"I have borne more from you than I do believe any creature breathing ever bore from a woman before . . . I dare say I can bear more.

"The love I now tender is as pure and as lasting as at any period in our correspondence."

Maria failed to respond to that final appeal. In the desolate heart of the youthful Dickens, Romance languished, died. For him, Maria, too, was dead. But he had never forgotten. We have seen how he had revived her as Dora Spenlow in *David Copperfield*. He was to revive her again in the person of Flora in *Little Dorrit,* which still remained to be written.

But now, after twenty-two years, the living Maria had come

back to him. Instantly his racing memory bridged the long years. He saw her again as she was in the long ago—young, beautiful, desirable—the girlish sweetheart of his youth.

There was not much in Maria's letter to get excited about—just a few friendly words to let him know that she was still in the land of the living. Dickens replied instantly—and with a warmth more exuberant than discreet. For Maria was no longer Maria Beadnell. She had long since married a Mr. Harry Winter, and had a little daughter of her own. Nevertheless, referring to her letter just received, Dickens wrote, among other things:

"Three or four and twenty years vanished like a dream when I opened it, with the touch of my young friend, David Copperfield, when he was in love."

Maria's reply came promptly, and perhaps not only matched his own indiscretion, but went him one better, for at that point Dickens seems to have quite lost his head. In the exchange of letters which followed, he implored her to tell her little daughter that Charles Dickens had "loved her mother with the most extravagant earnestness." And again, after sending her a personally inscribed copy of *David Copperfield*: "I wonder if you have sometimes laid down that book and thought: 'How truly that boy must have loved me, and how vividly that man remembers it.'"

Sparks of a reviving passion strewn so recklessly needed but a breath of encouragement to fan them into flaming infatuation on both sides. Maria wrote in return that she had always loved him—and implied that she always would. This correspondence, of course, had been carried on with the greatest secrecy. Now Dickens flung caution to the winds. He proposed a meeting. But when and where? How could it be arranged? Referring to her last letter, with its amazing declaration of love:

"You open a way," he wrote, "to a confidence between us which still once more, in perfect innocence and good faith, may be between ourselves alone."

At least his *intentions* were all right. And Maria rose to the occasion. A woman can always find a way. They met. The meeting was secret. And they were alone.

Any one interested in the outcome of that meeting may easily satisfy his curiosity. In the following passage from *Little Dorrit*

Dickens has recorded exactly what he thought and felt. One has only to replace the name Flora with that of Maria:

"Flora, always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath; but that was not much. Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony; but still that was not much. Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless years ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow."

Fatal indeed in its shattering disillusionment. Deadly in its revelation of stark reality.

And what of Maria—now Mrs. Winter? Such evidence as has been preserved indicates that she failed utterly to comprehend the unfavorable impression she had made on her former suitor. She really appears to have believed that she could giggle and titter and fawn her way back into the affections of this man who was in love, not with the stout, gushing creature she had become, but with his beautiful memory of the girl his heart had once known.

So far as Charles Dickens was concerned, with the end of that interview Mrs. Henry Winter passed out of his life forever. But he did not pass out of hers. She continued to annoy him with her attentions until he wrote to her, as coolly as courtesy would permit, that he did not care to pursue the affair further. Ironically enough, Maria afterwards sought the acquaintance of Catherine, and the two women became good friends. Moreover, years later when Mrs. Winter met with misfortune, Dickens not only came to her aid, but also interested himself in the welfare of her children.

The immediate result of that sorry episode was that the unhappy disillusioned Dickens hurled himself into new excesses of activity, new tasks, new diversions—but nothing could hold his interest long. To his uneasy friends he excused his wild restlessness of spirit, his fits of deep depression, on the grounds that he was incubating a new novel. To one of them he wrote:

"When about to begin a book, I am as infirm as Macbeth, as errant as mad Tom, and as rugged as Timon. I sit down to work, do nothing, get up, and walk a dozen miles, come back and sit down again . . . find a place where I resolve to stay for a month,

come home next morning . . . reject all engagements to have time to myself, get tired of myself, and yet can't come out of myself to be pleasant to anybody else."

He actually made a start on *Little Dorrit,* his next book, at this time, but got nowhere with it; nor did the brisk air of Folkestone, where he secluded himself for a time, stimulate the creative processes as he had hoped. He abandoned the book, returned to London, and indulged himself in an orgy of amateur theatricals which occupied most of the summer months. But even this favorite pastime failed to clear his mind of its ever-increasing burden of despondency and disquietude. Work, apparently, offered his only salvation; and he now plunged into his editorial tasks on *Household Words* with greater fury than ever.

The responsibilities he shouldered at this time would have killed most men. Instead of delegating routine tasks to assistants, who were entirely competent to handle them, he tried to do everything himself. Not content to sit in the editorial chair and direct the policy of the publication, he labored incessantly with his contributors, tried to show them how material should be written—and ended by doing the whole job himself.

The demands on his time were enormous; the drain on his energy terrific. Before long his nerves were in shreds. His vitality dwindled. Complete physical collapse was only a matter of time. Nevertheless, as the day approached when he must fill the need of the magazine for a new serial, he tried to get the writing of *Little Dorrit* definitely under way. But he soon realized that he could not write the novel and continue the killing pace he maintained on the magazine. In October he gathered up his numerous family and fled to Paris for the winter.

In Paris Dickens found the freedom he needed to work on *Little Dorrit.* When he wanted relief from the strain of writing he found it at the theatre, or in the company of the writers, artists, actors and musicians whom he numbered among his Paris associates. But the theatre was his greatest delight; and his many letters to England were filled with news about the plays he saw in Paris that year. For example:

"Next week we are to have at the Ambigu *Paradise Lost.* . . The wildest rumors are afloat as to the undressing of our first

parents." Indeed the scramble for tickets was so great that Dickens secured admission the first night only through the good offices of an influential friend who interceded with the manager. But he had all his trouble for nothing. Eve was very modestly dressed. "All Paris and the provinces," he wrote, "had been ransacked for a woman who had brown hair that would fall to the calves of her legs." And as luck would have it they had found one.

Little Dorrit, which started in *Household Words* in December of that year, (1855), scored an even bigger success than *Bleak House.* Thirty-five thousand copies were sold on New Year's day alone. Except for occasional flying trips to London, Dickens worked steadily on the book until late the following spring. On one of his brief visits to London, March 14th, 1856, he purchased Gads Hill Place in Kent, a house he had admired and dreamed of owning since childhood, though he had no immediate intention of making it his permanent home.

Home! The word no longer called up the happy associations that had once meant so much to his sensitive nature. In June Dickens left his family in Paris and sought peace and tranquility at Boulogne. There he found contentment of a kind until a dangerous epidemic swept the country. He then lost no time in removing both his family and himself back to the safety of London.

Practically his entire leisure the following fall was devoted to elaborate preparations for the New Year's theatricals at Tavistock House. For weeks, costumers, scene painters, gas-fitters, stage carpenters, dressmakers, tailors, and actors literally turned the house upside down. Dickens not only assumed active direction of the affair, but somehow managed to keep *Little Dorrit* coming along.

The play, *The Frozen Deep* by Wilkie Collins, was given on four nights starting January 6th, 1857, and became the talk of London. The Queen invited Dickens to bring his company to Buckingham Palace. Dickens politely refused. The Queen repeated her invitation. Dickens repeated his refusal. He would not go as an actor where he was not acceptable in real life. And that ended that. Of vastly greater importance—if anything was really important to Dickens at this period of his life—was that

the Tavistock House theatricals had placed his name as an actor-manager on the lips of all London; and that the long grind on *Little Dorrit* was almost at an end.

The last instalment of *Little Dorrit* appeared in *Household Words* the following April. Aside from the famous scene between Arthur Clennam and Flora, which, as pointed out, Dickens lifted from his own life, the book is chiefly notable for its grimly realistic picture of the old Marshalsea prison, and for his memorable portrait of the prisoner, Edward Dorrit. For an equally vivid word-picture of the horrors of an early nineteenth century debtor's prison, one must turn back to *Pickwick;* and the pathetic figure of Edward Dorrit is drawn with a skill unsurpassed in any of Dickens's works.

Of the other characters, those most likely to be remembered are Amy Dorrit, her pretty, frivolous sister Fanny, their wild, lazy, gambling brother Tip, the wealthy Mr. Merdle, the rascal Regaud, and lovable old Bob, the prison turnkey. The plot, still a good old standby with many writers, involves a search for a missing will; a mysterious message worked in beads on a bit of old silk paper long hidden in the back of a watch; a secret crime; blackmail—and in and behind it all the tragic figure of Edward Dorrit, prisoner of the Marshalsea.

That summer Dickens occupied his beautiful new home at Gads Hill, where he was host to a steady stream of distinguished visitors. He had attained the very pinnacle of world-wide prestige and popularity—was acknowledged and publicly lauded as the greatest writer of his time. He wore the mantle of greatness as an editor, an actor, a public speaker, a champion of reform. Idol of the people, he was more than a name to be revered—he had become a national institution. Insistent requests for personal appearances, for public readings, were pouring in from all parts of the country. Such was fame.

But he was walking in the shadows. Something was gravely wrong with Dickens. His friends saw it and discussed it among themselves. Various theories were advanced to account for the growing restlessness which tormented his spirit—the deep melancholy that seemed to have enveloped his soul. But, as usual in such circumstances, all these theories were wrong. The truth was

that this man who possessed the choicest gifts that the gods could bestow was desperately unhappy. His strange moods, his erratic behavior, his fevered search for distraction, were simply a bewildered and somewhat frantic seeking for something to fill an empty heart.

Now and then in letters to his confidant, John Forster, he had hinted at "dissatisfactions" with his home life. Once he mentioned "the skeleton in my domestic closet"; at another time he referred to "miseries of an older growth threatening to close upon me," and of a desire which had been growing upon him of secluding himself in a monastery. "I have a serious idea," he said, "I shall do it if I live."

Forster says he paid little attention to these veiled allusions to his friend's unhappiness, much less attributed them to their true cause. During the writing of *Little Dorrit,* Dickens had made no secret of the fearful strain which the book had put upon his invention, of his lack of the old facility of expression, and of his apprehensions of gradual failure of his creative powers. That was the real source of Dickens's trouble, Forster had thought.

Then came the letter which, Forster says, revealed to him for the first time the whole shocking truth. For many months—years indeed—Charles and Catherine had been drifting slowly apart. Misunderstandings, bickerings, outright quarrels had become more and more frequent. Existence together was no longer endurable—for Charles at least. Thenceforward they must live their lives apart.

"Poor Catherine and I," he wrote, "are not made for each other, and there is no help for it. It is not only that she makes me uneasy and unhappy, but that I make her so too—and much more so. She is exactly what you know, in the way of being amiable and complying; but we are strangely ill-assorted for the bond there is between us. God knows she would have been a thousand times happier if she had married another kind of man, and that her avoidance of this destiny would have been at least equally good for us both.

"I am often cut to the heart by thinking what a pity it is, for her own sake, that I ever fell in her way; and if I were sick or disabled tomorrow, I know how sorry she would be, and how

deeply grieved myself, to think how we had lost each other. But exactly the same incompatibility would arise the moment I was well again; and nothing on earth could make her understand me, or suit us to each other. Her temperament will not go with mine . . . it is all but hopeless that we should even try to struggle on. What is now befalling me I have seen steadily coming . . . and I know too well that you cannot, and no one can, help me."

Catherine made him "uneasy and unhappy." They were "strangely ill-assorted." And "nothing on earth could make her understand me, or suit us to each other." It is perhaps heresy to suggest that there may have been two sides to that story—since few writers have shown any disposition whatever to place part of the blame where it probably belongs.

Certainly Catherine's life had been anything but an easy one. Years upon years of innumerable household tasks, the endless entertaining, the trials of frequent shifting from one roof to another, the fatigues of travel, and the bearing of ten children one after another, had unquestionably taken their toll, robbed her of her beauty, sharpened her tongue and worn her patience thin. Moreover, no man of Dickens's temperament, his violent likes and dislikes, his nervousness, his irritableness, his impetuous and almost unbelievable energy, could have been an easy man for any woman to live with.

Dickens himself, in that first revealing letter to Forster, confessed: "I claim no immunity from blame. There is plenty of fault on my side, I dare say, in the way of a thousand uncertainties, caprices and difficulties of disposition; but only one thing will alter all that, and that is, the end which alters everything."

He himself provided the end which altered everything when he ungraciously and angrily defended in the public prints his action in putting his wife out of his life. "Amiable and complying" Catherine may have been; but there is little evidence to support the claim that she desired separation from her husband. In fact, she treasured and carefully preserved the letters he had written her, and afterwards willed them to her daughter, Kate, "as proof that the great author once loved her."

But the final break did not come at once. Forster and other

close friends did their utmost to adjust matters between them and to prevent a complete separation which, Dickens said, would have come long before but for the remonstrances and tearful pleading of Georgiana Hogarth. But nothing could put matters right, he said, "until we are all dead and buried and risen. It is not, with me, a matter of will, or trial, or sufferance, or good humor, or making the best of it, or making the worst of it, any longer. It is all despairingly over."

And it *was* over. In May, 1858, after twenty-three years as his mate, Catherine complied with his wishes, and left their beautiful Gads Hill home—to live in lodgings—somewhere—on her husband's bounty of £600 a year. The eldest son, then twenty-one years of age, went with his mother. The other children remained with himself and Georgiana; though Dickens readily agreed that the mother should see her children whenever she desired.

Thus Catherine passed out of his life. He never saw her again.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW CAREER

The announcement that Charles Dickens had broken with his wife was received with sorrow by his friends, and by his millions of readers with shocked bewilderment. In certain quarters, then as now, the news was greeted with a moist smacking of lips, sly whisperings, a wagging of tongues. There was, it was hinted, much more behind the separation of Mr. and Mrs. Dickens than appeared on the surface. Presently the author's name was being openly linked with that of a beautiful young actress, Miss Ellen Lawless Ternan, who had appeared with him in *The Frozen Deep*.

Such a charge was not only infamous: it was preposterous. Dickens was human, and had his share of human failings and imperfections; but a weakness for women was not one of them. In the whole voluminous record of his life, there exists not a single stain on his personal character.

It was loose-tongued gossip, however, which drove Dickens to

publish on the front page of *Household Words* an ill-considered and furiously angry defense of his action in putting away his wife. The statement was not only extremely intemperate in tone, but he absolved himself of all blame in the matter. He made matters worse by releasing through a friend an open letter of self-vindication which found its way to America and was published in the *New York Tribune.*

He was thrown into a frenzy of rage when his publisher-associates on *Household Words,* Bradbury and Evans, quite sensibly refused to print a similar statement in their separate periodical, *Punch,* of which Dickens owned no part and with which he had nothing whatever to do. He broke with them completely, and partnership was dissolved, and after a bitter lawsuit *Household Words* was sold by court order at public auction. Dickens bought it, through a friend, and merged it with a new periodical entitled *All the Year Round.*

From Catherine Dickens meanwhile came nothing but silence. Never a word, either of defense or of recrimination. For the moment she lived in the public imagination as "the woman who was not wanted"; but publicly she had never been more than a dim, shadowy figure in the brilliant life of her husband—and slowly, silently she faded back into the obscurity whence she had come.

Eventually the furor died down; public interest subsided; the unhappy episode was forgotten. But Charles Dickens was not. Among the great masses of the people, who knew him only through his writings, his popularity remained undiminished. They loved him for his deep sympathy with their needs, his profound understanding of their problems; for the boundless cheer and comfort he had brought into their lives.

Requests from all over the country for personal appearances, for public readings from his books, not only increased—they became more insistent than ever. And Dickens—a melancholy figure in his new-found freedom, if there ever was one—restlessly pacing the halls of his beautiful home at Gads Hill—set grimly about it to give his public what it wanted. He decided to make a tour.

John Forster, who knew and probably understood Dickens better than any man then living, tried to dissuade him—pleaded with

him to rest—not to pour out his life so recklessly upon the altar of public applause. But Dickens refused to listen. "Too late to say, put a curb on," he replied wearily, " . . . and I am the wrong man to say it to. I have no relief but in action. I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break, and die, if I spared myelf. Much better to die, doing."

A tour was arranged—the first of several which were to follow. They were also to be his first public appearances for pay. The bookings opened with sixteen nights at St. Martin's Hall, London, in July, 1859, followed by 125 readings in the principal cities of England, Ireland and Scotland. The readings selected for his first tour were the *Carol,* the *Chimes,* the *Trial in Pickwick,* chapters from *Dombey and Son,* his *Boots at the Holly-Tree Inn,* the *Poor Traveller,* and *Mrs. Gamp.* In these readings, Dickens impersonated not merely one character, but a half-dozen or more.

Tumultuous enthusiasm greeted him wherever he appeared. People traveled thirty miles to see and hear him, and turn-away audiences were the rule. Only 2,500 people heard him at Manchester because the great hall where he appeared could not accomodate any more. At Edinburgh, the crowds were so great that people were seated about him on the platform, squeezed into doorways and every other conceivable place. And still a multitude had to be denied admission.

"As to the effect," Dickens wrote Forster, "I wish you could have seen them after Lilian died in the *Chimes,* or when Scrooge woke in the *Carol* and talked to the boy outside the window. And at the end of *Dombey* yesterday afternoon, in the cold light of day, they all got up, after a short pause . . . and thundered and waved their hats with such astonishing heartiness and fondness that, for the first time in all my public career, they took me completely off my legs," and he saw them, "reel to one side as if a shock from without had shaken the hall."

This first tour was not only a succession of artistic triumphs but a tremendous financial success as well. Net profits to Dickens ran as high as five hundred pounds a week; and at Glasgow receipts reached the prodigious sum of six hundred pounds for three evenings and a morning alone.

The interval between the first and second tour was devoted to rest—and to promoting the business and editorial interests of his new periodical *All the Year Round.* The first of his famous Christmas stories to appear in that publication was the *Haunted House,* based upon a true occurrence in his own boyhood. It was there, too, that he introduced *The Uncommercial Traveller* papers. He said in explanation of the series:

"I am both a town traveller and a country traveller, and am always on the road. Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human-Interest Brothers. . . Literally speaking, I am always wandering here and there . . . now about the city streets, now about the country by-roads: seeing many little things, and some great things, which, because they interest me, I think may interest others."

And he was right. His lively imagination and keen wit made ordinary people and places and happenings delightful to read about. Even today one can turn to these sketches almost at random and find something of interest and charm to while away an idle hour. One may also learn from them, says Forster, "what kind of treatment he resorted to for the disorder of sleeplessness from which he had often suffered amid his late anxieties."

But he was also busy that summer on his next novel. While trying to readjust his life at Gads Hill before he undertook his first tour of readings, Dickens wrote Forster: "Growing inclinations of a fitful and undefined sort are upon me sometimes to fall to work on a new book. . . If I can discipline my thoughts into the channel of a new story, I have made up my mind to get to work on one; always supposing that I find myself, on trial, able to do well. . ." Even at that time some of the scenes and characters were taking form in his mind; but it was not until he returned from his first tour of readings that he made much definite progress with the book.

That book, when it appeared, bore the title, *A Tale of Two Cities.* The story was so widely read, and so indelibly impressed upon the public mind by the excellent motion picture version of 1935, that little need be said about it here. Mr. Grant White, a critic of Dickens's own time, expressed perfectly the sentiments of all readers when he wrote:

"Its portrayal of the noble-natured castaway makes it almost a peerless book in modern literature, and gives it a place among the highest examples of literary art. . . The conception of this character shows in its author an ideal of magnanimity and of charity unsurpassed There is not a grander, lovelier figure than the self-wrecked, self-devoted Sydney Carton, in literature or in history; and the story itself is so noble in its spirit, so grand and graphic in its style, and filled with a pathos so profound and simple, that it deserves and will surely take a place among the great serious works of imagination."

A Tale of Two Cities, which ran as a serial in *All the Year Round* from April to November, 1859, was the last of the Dickens books to be illustrated by Hablot Browne (Phiz). During their long and intimate association, Browne had also enlivened with his marvelous drawings the pages of *Martin Chuzzlewit, Bleak House, Little Dorrit,* and special scenes in *David Copperfield.* Now, after twenty years of work together, the friendship between Dickens and Browne was, for some mysterious reason, suddenly broken off.

There had been a good deal of speculation as to what could have occurred to terminate the long intimacy between the two in such an abrupt fashion. The world will never know; for neither author nor artist ever dropped a hint in explanation; and they carried the secret with them to their graves.

A pleasant episode for Dickens during the summer of 1860 was marked by the marriage of his daughter, Kate, to Charles Allston Collins, brother of his close friend, Wilkie Collins. Shortly thereafter, Dickens sold Tavistock House in town, resolving to make Gads Hill his future home. It was also during that period that he wrote on order a two-part story called *Hunted Down* for the *New York Ledger.* For this story he received the stupendous sum of one thousand pounds, which indicates his popularity and the extent of his reader-audience in America.

In October, 1860, Dickens started a short novel, *Great Expectations* which ran in *All the Year Round* from December 1st, 1860, to August 3rd, 1861. The story opens amid the tombstones of a bleak churchyard beside a dismal river, where Magwitch, an escaped convict, terrifies the child, Pip, into stealing for him food

and a file. Later, having escaped to Australia and made a fortune, Magwitch recalls the child's service with such a grateful heart that he resolves to make his little friend a gentleman. This is managed through an attorney who defended Magwitch at his trial. It is only when Magwitch risks his life to return and gratify his longing to see the gentleman he has made, that the youth discovers to his unspeakable horror that his benefactor is a convicted felon.

At that point the narrative gathers a thrilling momentum. Magwitch, discovered to the police by his deadly enemy, Compeyson, makes a sensational escape down the river. The pursuit, the fugitive's desperate encounter with his life-long enemy, and the whirlwind of events that bring matters to a fateful close, are as exciting —and as sad—as anything Dickens ever wrote.

In certain respects the story is less convincing than some of the earlier novels; and as a hero, Pip would have been a great disappointment to his own mother. But no true Dickens-lover will care. The story is there; Magwitch is there; and all the characters, Pip included, live and breathe and otherwise behave as Dickens characters should. Besides, if *Great Expectations* isn't top rank, that proves nothing except that even a great artist like Dickens couldn't write a masterpiece every time.

Following the completion of *Great Expectations,* Dickens resumed his reading tours which continued with intervals for rest, recreation and writing, until June, 1863. He had added to his program scenes from *Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby* and *A Tale of Two Cities.* These tours, though a great drain on his vitality, were a succession of triumphs which surpassed, if possible, the successes of his first tour.

In August, 1863, he got *Our Mutual Friend* under way. In September, however, Dickens suffered the first of a series of painful shocks which were to sink him deep into depression and seriously interfere with his work. The first blow was the death of his mother. On Christmas Eve, his lifelong friend Thackeray died. The following February, 1864, came tidings of the death of his second son, Walter, at Calcutta. These sad events, coming one after another, unnerved him completely, and for a long time gravely affected his health.

During the succeeding months he varied his writing activities somewhat, and sought forgetfulness by doctoring plays for the Lyceum Theatre management, but he took little real interest in the work. That year also ended sadly for Dickens with the death of his old friend, John Leech; and the new year, 1865, opened with a severe attack of illness which left him with a lameness in his left foot from which he continued to suffer off and on for the remainder of his life.

Yet he was scarcely on his feet again before he plunged into work. "Unhappily," says Forster, "he never thought of husbanding his strength except for the purpose of making fresh demands upon it." During the summer, however, finding himself utterly worn out, he was induced to take a brief holiday in France. Dickens wrote to his daughter: "Before I went away, I had certainly worked myself into a damaged state. But the moment I got away, I began, thank God, to get well."

But the evil destiny which had pursued him during the past two years was simply biding its time; for on his return journey to London he was in an appalling railway accident near Staplehurst in which ten people were killed and twenty frightfully injured. Dickens gave a ghastly account of the accident. It reads in part:

"Suddenly I came upon a staggering man covered with blood (I think he must have been flung clean out of his carriage), with such a frightful cut across the skull that I couldn't bear to look at him. I poured some water over his face, and gave him some to drink, then gave him some brandy, and laid him down on the grass, and he said, 'I am gone,' and died afterwards. Then I stumbled over a lady lying on her back against a little pollard tree, with the blood streaming over her face (which was lead colour) in a number of distinct little streams from the head. I asked her if she could swallow a little brandy and she just nodded, and I gave her some and left her for somebody else. The next time I passed her, she was dead. Then a man . . . came running up to me and implored me to help him find his wife, who was afterwards found dead. No imagination can conceive the ruin of the carriages, or the extraordinary weights under which the

people were lying, or the complications into which they were twisted up among iron and wood, and mud and water."

Eventually, during the excitement, Dickens remembered that the manuscript of *Our Mutual Friend* was in his luggage, and crawled back into his carriage and retrieved it. But the terrible shock of the disaster left his nerves shaken and his energy seriously diminished for weeks afterwards. Nevertheless he stuck doggedly at the writing of *Our Mutual Friend,* which had begun in *All the Year Round* in May, 1864. He also somehow managed to write *Doctor Marigold's Prescription* which appeared in the Christmas, 1864, issue.

"The novel called *Our Mutual Friend*," says Chesterton, "is in many ways a real reaction towards the earlier Dickens manner... It begins with a good piece of rowdy satire, wildly exaggerated and extremely true. . . This beginning, which is like a burst of the old exuberant Dickens is, of course, the Veneering dinner-party. In its own way it is as good as anything that Dickens ever did. There is the old faculty of managing a crowd, of making character clash with character, that had made Dickens not only the democrat but even the demagogue of fiction. For if it is hard to manage a mob, it is hardest of all to manage a swell mob. The particular kind of chaos that is created by the hospitality of a rich upstart has perhaps never been so accurately and outrageously described. Every touch about the thing is true . . ." The mood and method of the whole book, Chesterton says, is pure farce—"and any return to his farce must be welcomed, like a young man come back from the dead."

CHAPTER IX

DICKENS REVISITS AMERICA

THE summer and autumn of 1865 were filled with dark days for Dickens. His slumbers were broken by hideous nightmares, in which he lived over and over again all the horrors he had experienced in the railway accident. Grief over the death of friends

and loved ones oppressed him. The frequent return of his foot trouble brought agonizing pain. His pulse often ran at an alarming rate. Growing anxiety over the poor state of his health, together with undeniable evidences of his failing literary powers, filled him with grave misgivings for the future.

"For some time," he wrote in February, 1866, "I have been very unwell." He suspected "some degeneration of some function of the heart. Of course," he went on, "I am not so foolish as to suppose that all my work can have been achieved without *some* penalty . . ."

His long labors on *Our Mutual Friend* had undoubtedly taken a lamentable toll of his strength and nervous vitality; and when he was again pressed to resume his public readings, his own secret apprehensions regarding his health should have counseled caution against undertaking too soon the strain and fatigue which a third tour would involve.

Nevertheless, he doped himself with tonics and signed for the tour. This tour was to differ from former tours in that he was to be relieved of every anxiety except of the readings themselves. But, as Forster points out, "such rapid and repeated changes of nights at distant places must in time have broken down the strongest man. . . Nothing could materially abate either the physical exhaustion or the nervous strain."

Fragments from Dickens's own letters during that tour tell their own story. "I am very tired today . . . eighty miles of railway and late hours to boot." "It has been very heavy work, getting up at 6:30 each morning after a heavy night, and I am not at all well today." "I have so severe a pain in the ball of my left eye that it makes it hard for me to do anything . . ." "On Friday night . . . I was taken so faint afterwards that they laid me on a sofa at the hall for half an hour." "Twice last week I was seized in a most distressing manner—apparently in the heart." "Yesterday . . . an internal malady . . . attended with a sudden loss of blood." "I am very tired; I cannot sleep."

Aside from these references to the appalling physical and nervous strain under which he worked, his letters were filled with news of the turbulent greetings he received, and of the enthusiastic crowds which filled the halls to the roof each night.

But in the weeks that followed, other disturbing factors entered the situation to over-excite his mind and ravage sleep. Tempting offers were reaching him from America. "Every mail brings me proposals," he wrote. One of them, from Boston, guaranteed an advance of £10,000 for a series of readings in that city alone. Dickens not only considered these offers seriously, but resolved to do something about them.

At the close of the provincial tour early in August, 1867, George Dolby, his manager, was dispatched to America to look the situation over and report. Dolby returned with glowing accounts of the prospects for a tour in the United States, and was sent back on the next boat to conclude the arrangements. And exchange of cable messages on October 1st settled the business. Once more, after a lapse of twenty-five years, Charles Dickens was going to America.

Dickens spent the following month adjusting his business and private affairs and in making preparations for travel. The prospective American tour fired his imagination, ran like a magic potion in his blood. He was eager to be off. Even a tortuous attack of his foot trouble, which laid him up for a time, and the additional agony of erysipelas, in no wise dampened his ardor. Advancing in age, foreseeing that his career as a novelist was drawing to a close, he became obsessed with the idea that he must make the greatest possible amount of money in the shortest possible time. And what Dickens wanted, he would have. Nervous exhaustion, physical illness, excruciating pain—nothing could stand in the way of his indomitable will.

On November 2nd, 1867, he was given a great farewell banquet in London. On the 9th, Dickens sailed for Boston.

The America which Dickens rediscovered on his landing at Boston on November 19th, 1867, had changed vastly since his visit in 1842—even as he himself had changed. The man had aged—the country had grown up. Cities had increased prodigiously in size—and there were more of them. Where he had formerly seen swamps there were now rows of beautiful streets, lined with imposing business structures and attractive homes. Intelligence and

enterprise had transformed a clumsy infant-nation into a lusty giant. A new, a brighter, a wiser and happier generation had taken the country in hand. In one respect, however, the people remained unchanged—and that was in the old exuberant warmth of affection with which they received their distinguished visitor.

Says Forster: "The greeting was to the full as extraordinary as that of twenty-five years before. . . In every house, in every car, in every steam-boat, in every theatre, in America, the characters, the fancies, the phraseology of Dickens were become familiar beyond those of any other writer of books." And one of the newspapers of the period observed that: "Of the millions here who treasure every word he has written, there are tens of thousands who would make a large sacrifice to see and hear the man who has made happy so many hours."

Even that statement was mild. The first four readings in Boston were not only an immediate and complete sell-out, but "an immense train of people waited in the freezing streets for twelve hours" to buy tickets priced at $2.00 each. Whereupon the ticket speculators got busy—of which more hereafter.

It seems impossible to exaggerate the success which Dickens achieved with his readings in America, or their effect upon his vast audiences. Newspaper critics of the day credit him with a marvelous voice and extraordinary gifts of expression. It was said that he actually lived the characters he portrayed. Every tone, every gesture, every movement of the features, and every expression of the eye, was calculated with the highest art.

His audiences were simply carried away by the compelling life-likeness of these creations. Dickens possessed an uncanny ability to mould the emotions of the listeners to his will—to make them roar with laughter or weep hysterical tears. In Boston, during his reading of *A Christmas Carol,* one young woman burst into such a passion of grief about Tiny Tim that she had to be taken out.

Wherever Dickens appeared, his fame preceded him. In New York thousands clamored for seats and had to be denied. The sale of tickets in New York had begun two days before the first public reading in Boston, and specuators, safe in the certainty of exorbitant profits, went up and down the long queue of ticket buyers offering twenty dollars for anybody's place in the line—without

a single taker. To discourage this practice, tickets were limited to six to any one person, but "we can't beat the speculators," Dickens finally confessed. Nor could they. One man employed a crew of fifty men to stand in line daily, and so got his hands on at least 300 tickets for each performance by this method alone.

"The speculators," says a contemporary report, "assembled at midnight; at two in the morning a few honest buyers began to arrive; at five there were, of all classes, two lines of not less than 800 each; at eight there was at least 5,000 persons in the two lines; at nine (when the box-office opened) each line was more than three quarters of a mile long. . . Members of families relieved each other . . .; waiters flew across the street from neighboring restaurants to serve parties who were taking their breakfast in the open air." And remember, this was in the dead of winter, and it was bitterly cold. In Brooklyn "the noble army of speculators" were furnished each with a straw mattress, two blankets and a bottle of whiskey. Thus equipped, they flopped down in the icy street and remained there all night, waiting for the box-office to open. Then there was a free-for-all fight to get choice places at the head of the line.

Similar scenes were repeated over and over again in every large city where Dickens appeared. He became the most unpopular man in the United States, because he could not cram four thousand people into a hall built to seat two thousand. But the great audiences which did gain admission received him with the same wild enthusiasm. With voice, hand and eye, he controlled them like a master-magician. The vividness and dramatic power of his impersonations were quite sufficient to make them shiver with terror, shriek with merriment, or break down in tears.

Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Providence—no matter where Dickens went—the story was always the same. When he appeared at Rochester and Buffalo, people traveled many miles from remote points in the Canadian wilderness—battling their way through winter storms, over almost impassible roads and frozen streams to see and hear the man who had gladdened their lonely firesides with his marvelous stories, and brought enchantment and beauty and laughter into their dreary lives.

The tour—or series of tours, for it was confined to the East—

radiated from New York and Boston, the intervals between tours being filled by return engagements in those two cities. George Dolby was a highly capable and energetic manager, but, in his own opinion, the most abused man in America. With a staff of six men to help him, he was continually in hot water.

The responsibilities for advertising, the sale of tickets, the hiring of theatres or halls, travelling and hotel arrangements, and the everlasting battle with the speculators, fell squarely on George Dolby's shoulders. And probably no man was ever so cuffed and beaten and kicked around. Even the newspapers went after him. The climax came during one of the return engagements in Boston. The advertisements failed to appear. The speculators defied him. There was a bad mix-up in the sale of tickets. Then the town was hit by a snowstorm which would have ruined the attendance anyway. Poor Dolby could endure no more. He got gloriously drunk, started a free-for-all fight, and was hauled off to the police station to think it over.

Much more serious in its ultimate consequences for Dickens was the severity of the winter weather. On his first return to Boston he contracted a cold which never quitted him during the entire time he was in America. The difficulties and fatigues of travel aggravated the ailment; a grave catarrhal condition developed; and though he fought courageously to keep going, the strain upon his strength and nerves was sometimes too great even for a man of his iron resolution. On several occasions he fell seriously ill, and his engagements had to be cancelled.

As time went on these illnesses became, if not more frequent, certainly more alarming. Attacks of extreme faintness were added to insomnia and a complete loss of appetite. Often his foot was so painfully swollen that he could not walk. His cough became so bad at times that he had to take laudanum in order to sleep. In one of his letters he wrote: "I am nearly used up. Climate, distance, catarrh, travelling, and hard work have begun to tell heavily upon me." And again: "I am not at times without the nervous dread that I may some day sink altogether." George Dolby was at his side constantly, "as tender as a woman, as watchful as a doctor," his every hour filled with fear of com-

plete collapse. But somehow Dickens always rallied. Somehow his indomitable will enabled him to carry on.

Even under these distressing conditions, the tour was a financial and artistic triumph beyond anything before seen in America. In New York and Boston receipts ran close to four thousand dollars a night, and between two and three thousand dollars a night in the other cities visited. Expenses ran high; but in spite of that fact the net profits to Dickens from the tour exceeded one hundred thousand dollars.

Five farewell appearances were made in New York, followed by a great dinner for Dickens at Delmonico's, given by the New York Press. Dickens would gladly have foregone this honor. He was far too ill to attend; and the pain in his swollen foot was an ever-present agony. But he could not disappoint his many friends. He was received with deafening cheers as he hobbled into the banquet hall on the arm of Mr. Horace Greeley, who presided.

It was a brilliant, never-to-be-forgotten occasion; and in the beautiful tributes expressed, a brilliant moment in the life of the author of *Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield*. In his speech of acknowledgement, Dickens promised that never again should a copy of his *Notes,* or his *Chuzzlewit,* be issued without mention of the vast changes that had taken place since his visit twenty-five years before. Abiding always in his heart, he said, would be a grateful remembrance of the politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality, and consideration in all ways for which he had to thank the people of America. He no longer regarded them merely as readers of his books, or as audiences, but as a host of personal friends.

He sailed two days later on the *Russia,* and arrived in England the first week of May, 1868.

CHAPTER X

THE END OF THE ROAD

A PLEASANT voyage home gave Dickens the repose he so greatly needed. Long, lazy hours in the healing sunshine, good food, sleep, and his own marvelous recuperative powers, did the rest. Dickens arrived home nicely browned and looking "seven years younger," as his doctor said. Forster alone noted, with deep misgivings, that behind that appearance of rugged health "there was a manifest abatement of his natural forces, the elasticity of his bearing was impaired, and the wonderful brightness of eye was dimmed at times."

But if Dickens was aware of what his exertions in America had cost him, he kept it to himself. There were fresh demands upon his energy to be met, and he plunged into them in high spirits and complete self-confidence.

Before leaving for America, he had planned on his return to make a farewell tour of England—and then quit. This tour got under way the following October. And, as usual, tremendous audiences greeted him everywhere. Their delight at his return seemed unbounded. Receipts were enormous. But Dickens was not satisfied. He wanted to give his public something better, grander, more startling—an achievement that would leave behind him "the recollection of something very passionate and dramatic," and stand forever as the supreme triumph of his acting career.

Before long he hit upon the idea of presenting that great scene from *Oliver Twist*—the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes. "I have no doubt that I could perfectly petrify an audience. . ." he wrote. It was a difficult scene. Dickens spent days rehearsing it, drawing prodigally on his strength to bring it to the highest point of dramatic effectiveness.

The murder scene, as he finally gave it, certainly petrified his audiences. His listeners shuddered, gasped with horror—many women screamed. Once twenty women fainted, and were carried out unconscious. The famous actor Macready, who saw Dickens do this scene, said it equaled Macbeth murdered twice.

But Dickens paid a terrible price for his "supreme triumph." Says Dolby: "The terrible force with which the actual perpetration of this most foul murder was described was of such a kind as to render Mr. Dickens utterly prostrate for some moments after its delivery; and it was not until he had vanished from the platform that the public had sufficiently recovered their composure to appreciate the circumstance that the horrors to which they had been listening were but a story and not a reality."

And as the tour proceeded, the drain upon his vitality became more and more pronounced. The old foot trouble again returned to torture him. In a letter to Georgiana Hogarth he confessed to sickness and sleepless nights. He had to lie quietly all day in order to gain strength to appear at night. Once more spells of dizziness and extreme faintness assailed him, even in the course of his readings. His memory failed. His sight became impaired. There were strange flutterings of the heart, and attacks of "numbness" on the left side of his face, which spread to the arms, hands and legs on that side of the body. Again and again his friends, his children, implored him to quit. He stubbornly refused. The readings went on. The illnesses continued. The symptoms grew worse. Of course, there could be only one outcome—and in April, 1869, it occurred—sudden and complete collapse. After a consultation of hastily summoned physicians, the following certificate was issued:

"The undersigned certify that Mr. Charles Dickens has been seriously unwell, through great exhaustion and fatigue of body and mind consequent upon his public Readings and long and frequent railway journeys. In our judgment Mr. Dickens will not be able with safety to resume his Readings for several months to come.

"Thos. Watson, M.D.
"F. Carr Beard."

Only his sorrowing friends discerned the truth between the lines. But many weeks of physical and mental repose, expert medical care, and his own magnificent fighting-spirit, spared Charles Dickens to the world for yet a little while.

Almost a year later, he was able to indulge his desire to give

a final series of twelve farewell readings in London. The famous murder scene had been abandoned. He contented himself with scenes from *A Christmas Carol* and from *Pickwick*. The great crowds that assembled to hear him packed St. James Hall to overflowing. At each appearance a doctor sat at his side. Each appearance was followed by a generous interval for rest, so that his strength would not be overtaxed. The last reading was given in March, 1870.

At the end he closed the volume of *Pickwick* and addressed a few final words to his audience. In conclusion he said: "From these garish lights I vanish now forevermore, with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, and affectionate farewell."

He tossed them a kiss and was gone.

Dickens's last days were spent in the peace and tranquillity of his beautiful home at Gads Hill—days made happier by the affectionate care and devotion of Georgiana Hogarth. Dickens often said that Georgiana "has a higher claim upon my affection, respect and gratitude than anybody in the world."

"From the age of fifteen," he once wrote, "she has devoted herself to our house and our children. She has been their playmate, nurse, instructress, friend, protectress, advisor and companion . . . I do not know—I cannot by any stretch of fancy imagine—what would have become of them but for this aunt, to whom they are devoted, and who has sacrificed the best part of her youth and life to them."

And again, in his will, in which he bequeathed to his sister-in-law the sum of £8,000, free of legacy duty, he said: "I also give to the said Georgiana Hogarth all my private papers whatsoever and wheresoever, and I leave her my grateful blessing as the best and truest friend man ever had."

Among the "private papers" which he entrusted to the care of Georgiana Hogarth, was a sixty-page, forty-thousand-word manuscript written by Dickens in 1846—and meant for the eyes of his children alone. In the course of time, Georgiana Hogarth in turn bequeathed it to Dickens's sixth child, Henry Fielding Dickens, with her admonition that it must not be published so

long as any child of Dickens lived. Sir Henry, the novelist's last surviving child, died in December, 1933, and his family was then free to give the treasured manuscript to the world. Publication rights were finally secured by the *London Daily Mail*. The price paid was $170,000. The name of the work was *The Life of Our Lord*.

How little Dickens realized, as he looked back over the long road he had traveled, that in future years a product of his pen would be valued at fifteen dollars a word. But it is safe to say that during those closing days of his life such fancies were furtherest from his thoughts. There was still work to do, a book to write. Already he had it well under way.—*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

In that story, which Longfellow called "one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful," that Dickens ever wrote, the aging novelist returned to the theme of which he was very fond—murder and mystery. His idea for the story, as he communicated it to Forster, "was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle. . . Discovery by the murderer of the utter needlessness of the murder for its object, was to follow hard upon commission of the deed; but all discovery of the murderer was to be baffled till the close, when, by means of a gold ring which had resisted the corrosive effects of the lime into which he had thrown the body, not only the person murdered was to be identified but the locality of the crime and the man who committed it."

The principal characters are young Edwin Drood, handsome, debonaire, rich, with everything to live for; the beautiful Rosa, whom he is pledged to marry; Neville Landless, also fond of Rosa; young Drood's Uncle Jasper, degenerate organist at the local cathedral; Durdles, the drunken stonemason who potters among the grave vaults at the cathedral; an old hag who keeps an opium den; and the mysterious Datchery.

Now, Edwin's Uncle Jasper fosters an unholy passion for Rosa and means to possess her. To accomplish his foul purpose, he plots the murder of his nephew, but in such manner that the crime cannot be traced back to him. The action unfolds against a background of mystery and terror. On a wild midnight of howling wind and storm, Jasper Drood lures his nephew, Edwin, to a

gloomy crypt in the sub-basement of the cathedral. From that moment the young man is never seen again.

Did Jasper Drood succeed in his plot to murder his nephew? Was his the body that Durdles, the drunken stonemason, buried in lime in the newly-made grave in the churchyard that night? Or was the young man secretly rescued from the horrible tomb to which his supposedly dead body had been consigned? What did the old hag, keeper of the opium-den, see and hear when she followed Jasper on the night of the murder? Neville Landless has been seen in Jasper's company. What does he know? And who was Datchery, with his great mop of white hair (obviously a wig), who appears from nowhere, and spends his time prowling about trying to get information? Was he a detective, or Edwin Drood himself in disguise, who had returned to the scene to claim vengeance?

These are only a few of the problems which continue to vex the world. Literally hundreds of books and articles have been written on the subject. Solutions of every description have been proposed—all of which prove nothing except that *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was, is, and probably will remain the greatest unsolved mystery in all literature.

But we may be sure that it was no mystery to Dickens. Day after day, in the restful quiet of his study at Gads Hill, he worked upon the book. Page followed page; chapter followed chapter.

It was summer in England then. As he sat at his desk his tired eyes could look through the windows into a world of bright sunshine and cool, shifting shadows. From woodland and field, from lawn and garden, came the fresh clean smell of earth, of green leaves, and the fragrance of flowers. Now near, now far, rose the sweet melody of birds. Even the rustling of the boughs near his window made music. A world of living beauty, of sparkling sunshine, of enchanting harmony, of peace. England in June!

All that day he spent at his writing, pausing only for lunch. Late in the afternoon his pen hovered over the sentence he had just written. It ended with the words: "and then fell to with an appetite." The twenty-third chapter of *Edwin Drood* was still unfinished—but he laid it aside. He had worked hard all day—

he could do no more. He would have dinner presently. After dinner he would walk in the twilight . . .

When he appeared for dinner an hour later, Georgiana, who happened to be the only member of the family at home, noted that he looked very tired, that he was silent and abstracted; but as this was his usual manner after a hard day of writing, she was not disturbed. Dickens seated himself at the table, but the meal had scarcely begun when Georgiana was alarmed by a singular change of color and a spasm of pain that suddenly crossed his face. She asked anxiously if he were ill. He replied: "Yes, very ill; I have been very ill for the last hour," but he wished the dinner to go on.

For a moment he struggled valiantly against the seizure that was advancing swiftly upon him. Words—broken, meaningless—fell from his lips—an incoherent babble. He tottered to his feet, swayed, would have fallen but for the supporting arms of Georgiana. She implored him to lie down while she summoned medical aid.

"Yes—on the ground," he mumbled—and fell heavily to the floor.

With great effort Georgiana lifted the stricken novelist and laid him on a couch in the dining room. A messenger was dispatched for the local physician. The children were summoned. The daughter, Mary, who was dining at a house only a little distance from home, was called from the dinner table by her sister, Kate, the first to receive the message. The sister had a change of dress and a cab in waiting. Describing afterwards the events of that fatal night, Mary said:

"Quickly I changed my gown, and we began the short journey which brought us to our sadly altered home. Our dear aunt was waiting for us at the open door, and when I saw her face I think the last faint hope died within me."

All through the night, after the doctor had done all that he could do, the three anxious women watched at the bedside, hoping and praying that the man they so devotedly loved would open his eyes and speak to them again. But he never moved, never opened his eyes, never gave a sign that he was conscious of their presence.

The next day, June 9th, 1870, a celebrated London physician, Dr. Russell Reynolds, was called into consultation, but he could only confirm the hopeless verdict already reached.

As evening fell, the grieving women saw a shudder pass over the body of their loved one. A long sigh escaped his lips, a tear coursed down his cheek.

At that moment the tired spirit found release. The great warm heart that had touched the heart of all humanity was stilled.

Charles Dickens had reached the end of the road.

FINIS

THE LAZY TOUR OF TWO IDLE APPRENTICES

[1857]

THE LAZY TOUR OF TWO IDLE APPRENTICES

CHAPTER I

In the autumn month of September, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, wherein these presents bear date, two idle apprentices, exhausted by the long, hot summer, and the long, hot work it had brought with it, ran away from their employer. They were bound to a highly meritorious lady (named Literature), of fair credit and repute, though, it must be acknowledged, not quite so highly esteemed in the City as she might be. This is the more remarkable, as there is nothing against the respectable lady in that quarter, but quite the contrary; her family having rendered eminent service to many famous citizens of London. It may be sufficient to name Sir William Walworth, Lord Mayor under King Richard II., at the time of Wat Tyler's insurrection, and Sir Richard Whittington: which latter distinguished man and magistrate was doubtless indebted to the lady's family for the gift of his celebrated cat. There is also strong reason to suppose that they rang the Highgate bells for him with their own hands.

The misguided young men who thus shirked their duty to the mistress from whom they had received many favours, were actuated by the low idea of making a perfectly idle trip, in any direction. They had no intention of going anywhere in particular; they wanted to see nothing, they wanted to know nothing, they wanted to learn nothing, they wanted to do nothing. They wanted only to be idle. They took to themselves (after Hogarth), the names of Mr. Thomas Idle and Mr. Francis Goodchild; but there was not a moral pin to choose between them, and they were both idle in the last degree.

Between Francis and Thomas, however, there was this difference of character: Goodchild was laboriously idle, and would take upon himself any amount of pains and labour to assure himself that he was idle; in short, had no better idea of idleness than that it was useless industry. Thomas Idle, on the other hand, was an idler of the unmixed Irish or Neapolitan type; a passive idler, a born-and-bred idler, a consistent idler, who practised what he would have preached if he had not been too idle to preach; a one entire and perfect chrysolite of idleness.

The two idle apprentices found themselves, within a few hours of their escape, walking down into the North of England, that is to say, Thomas was lying in a meadow, looking at the railway trains as they passed over a distant viaduct—which was *his* idea of walking down into the North; while Francis was walking a mile due South against time—which was *his* idea of walking down into the North. In the meantime the day waned, and the milestones remained unconquered.

'Tom,' said Goodchild, 'the sun is getting low. Up, and let us go forward!'

'Nay,' quoth Thomas Idle, 'I have not done with Annie Laurie yet.' And he proceeded with that idle but popular ballad, to the effect that for the bonnie young person of that name he would 'lay him doon and dee'—equivalent, in prose, to lay him down and die.

'What an ass that fellow was!' cried Goodchild, with the bitter emphasis of contempt.

'Which fellow?' asked Thomas Idle.

'The fellow in your song. Lay him doon and dee! Finely he 'd show off before the girl by doing *that*. A sniveller! Why couldn't he get up, and punch somebody's head!'

'Whose?' asked Thomas Idle.

'Anybody's. Everybody's would be better than nobody's! If I fell into that state of mind about a girl, do you think I 'd lay me doon and dee? No, sir,' proceeded Goodchild, with a disparaging assumption of the Scottish accent, 'I 'd get me oop and peetch into something. Wouldn't you?'

'I wouldn't have anything to do with her,' yawned Thomas Idle. 'Why should I take the trouble?'

'It 's no trouble, Tom, to fall in love,' said Goodchild, shaking his head.

'It 's trouble enough to fall out of it, once you 're in it,' retorted Tom. 'So I keep out of it altogether. It would be better for you, if you did the same.'

Mr. Goodchild, who is always in love with somebody, and not unfrequently with several objects at once, made no reply. He heaved a sigh of the kind which is termed by the lower orders 'a bellowser,' and then, heaving Mr. Idle on his feet (who was not half so heavy as the sigh), urged him northward.

These two had sent their personal baggage on by train: only retaining each a knapsack. Idle now applied himself to constantly regretting the train, to tracking it through the intricacies of Bradshaw's Guide, and finding out where it is now—and where now—and where now—and to asking what was the use of walking, when you could ride at such a pace as that. Was it to see the country? If that was the object, look at it out of the carriage windows. There was a great deal more of it to be seen there than here. Besides, who wanted to see the country? Nobody. And again, whoever did walk? Nobody. Fellows set off to walk, but they never did it. They came back and said they did, but they didn't. Then why should he walk? He wouldn't walk. He swore it by this milestone!

It was the fifth from London, so far had they penetrated into the North. Submitting to the powerful chain of argument, Goodchild proposed a return to the Metropolis, and a falling back upon Euston Square Terminus. Thomas assented with alacrity, and so they walked down into the North by the next morning's express, and carried their knapsacks in the luggage-van.

It was like all other expresses, as every express is and must be. It bore through the harvest country a smell like a large washing-day, and a sharp issue of steam as from a huge brazen tea-urn. The greatest power in nature and art combined, it yet glided over dangerous heights in the sight of people looking up from fields and roads, as smoothly and unreally as a light miniature plaything. Now, the engine shrieked in hysterics of such intensity, that it seemed desirable that the men who had her in charge should hold her feet, slap her hands, and bring her to; now, bur-

rowed into tunnels with a stubborn and undemonstrative energy so confusing that the train seemed to be flying back into leagues of darkness. Here, were station after station swallowed up by the express without stopping; here, stations where it fired itself in like a volley of cannon-balls, swooped away four country-people with nosegays, and three men of business with portmanteaus, and fired itself off again, bang, bang, bang! At long intervals were uncomfortable refreshment-rooms, made more uncomfortable by the scorn of Beauty towards Beast, the public (but to whom she never relented, as Beauty did in the story, towards the other Beast), and where sensitive stomachs were fed, with a contemptuous sharpness occasioning indigestion. Here, again, were stations with nothing going but a bell, and wonderful wooden razors set aloft on great posts, shaving the air. In these fields, the horses, sheep, and cattle were well used to the thundering meteor, and didn't mind; in those, they were all set scampering together, and a herd of pigs scoured after them. The pastoral country darkened, became coaly, became smoky, became infernal, got better, got worse, improved again, grew rugged, turned romantic; was a wood, a stream, a chain of hills, a gorge, a moor, a cathedral town, a fortified place, a waste. Now, miserable black dwellings, a black canal, and sick black towers of chimneys; now, a trim garden, where the flowers were bright and fair; now, a wilderness of hideous altars all a-blaze; now, the water meadows with their fairy rings; now, the mangy patch of unlet building ground outside the stagnant town, with the larger ring where the Circus was last week. The temperature changed, the dialect changed, the people changed, faces got sharper, manner got shorter, eyes got shrewder and harder; yet all so quickly, that the spruce guard in the London uniform and silver lace, had not yet rumpled his shirt-collar, delivered half the dispatches in his shiny little pouch, or read his newspaper.

Carlisle! Idle and Goodchild had got to Carlisle. It looked congenially and delightfully idle. Something in the way of public amusement had happened last month, and something else was going to happen before Christmas; and, in the meantime there was a lecture on India for those who liked it—which Idle and Goodchild did not. Likewise, by those who liked them, there were

impressions to be bought of all the vapid prints, going and gone, and of nearly all the vapid books. For those who wanted to put anything in missionary boxes, here were the boxes. For those who wanted the Reverend Mr. Podgers (artist's proofs, thirty shillings), here was Mr. Podgers to any amount. Not less gracious and abundant, Mr. Codgers also of the vineyard, but opposed to Mr. Podgers, brotherly tooth and nail. Here, were guide-books to the neighbouring antiquities, and eke the Lake country, in several dry and husky sorts; here, many physically and morally impossible heads of both sexes, for young ladies to copy, in the exercise of the art of drawing; here, further, a large impression of Mr. Spurgeon, solid as to the flesh, not to say even something gross. The working young men of Carlisle were drawn up, with their hands in their pockets, across the pavements, four and six abreast, and appeared (much to the satisfaction of Mr. Idle) to have nothing else to do. The working and growing young women of Carlisle, from the age of twelve upwards, promenaded the streets in the cool of the evening, and rallied the said young men. Sometimes the young men rallied the young women, as in the case of a group gathered round an accordion-player, from among whom a young man advanced behind a young woman for whom he appeared to have a tenderness, and hinted to her that he was there and playful, by giving her (he wore clogs) a kick.

On market mornings, Carlisle woke up amazingly, and became (to the two Idle Apprentices) disagreeably and reproachfully busy. There were its cattle market, its sheep market, and its pig market down by the river, with raw-boned, and shock-headed Rob Roys hiding their Lowland dresses beneath heavy plaids prowling in and out among the animals, and flavouring the air with fumes of whiskey. There was its corn market down the main street, with hum of chaffering over open sacks. There was its general market in the street too, with heather brooms on which the purple flower still flourished, and heather baskets primitive and fresh to behold. With women trying on clogs and caps at open stalls, and 'Bible stalls' adjoining. With 'Doctor Mantle's Dispensary for the cure of all Human Maladies and no charge for advice,' and with Doctor Mantle's 'Laboratory of Medical, Chemical, and Botanical Science'—both healing institutions estab-

lished on one pair of trestles, one board, and one sun-blind. With the renowned phrenologist from London, begging to be favoured (at sixpence each) with the company of clients of both sexes, to whom, on examination of their heads, he would make revelations 'enabling him or her to know themselves.' Through all these bargains and blessings, the recruiting-sergeant watchfully elbowed his way, a thread of War in the peaceful skein. Likewise on the walls were printed hints that the Oxford Blues might not be indisposed to hear of a few fine active young men; and that whereas the standard of that distinguished corps is full six feet, 'growing lads of five feet eleven' need not absolutely despair of being accepted.

Scenting the morning air more pleasantly than the buried majesty of Denmark did, Messrs. Idle and Goodchild rode away from Carlisle at eight o'clock one forenoon, bound for the village of Hesket, Newmarket, some fourteen miles distant. Goodchild (who had already begun to doubt whether he was idle: as his way always is when he has nothing to do) had read of a certain black old Cumberland hill or mountain, called Carrock, or Carrock Fell; and had arrived at the conclusion that it would be the culminating triumph of Idleness to ascend the same. Thomas Idle, dwelling on the pains inseparable from that achievement, had expressed the strongest doubts of the expediency, and even of the sanity, of the enterprise; but Goodchild had carried his point, and they rode away.

Up hill and down hill, and twisting to the right, and twisting to the left, and with old Skiddaw (who has vaunted himself a great deal more than his merits deserve; but that is rather the way of the Lake country), dodging the apprentices in a picturesque and pleasant manner. Good, weather-proof, warm, pleasant houses, well white-limed, scantily dotting the road. Clean children coming out to look, carrying other clean children as big as themselves. Harvest still lying out and much rained upon; here and there, harvest still unreaped. Well-cultivated gardens attached to the cottages, with plenty of produce forced out of their hard soil. Lonely nooks, and wild; but people can be born, and married, and buried in such nooks, and can live and love, and be loved, there as elsewhere, thank God! (Mr. Goodchild's remark.)

By and by, the village. Black, coarse-stoned, rough-windowed houses; some with outer staircases, like Swiss houses; a sinuous and stony gutter winding up hill and round the corner, by way of street. All the children running out directly. Women pausing in washing, to peep from doorways and very little windows. Such were the observations of Messrs. Idle and Goodchild, as their conveyance stopped at the village shoemaker's. Old Carrock gloomed down upon it all in a very ill-tempered state; and rain was beginning.

The village shoemaker declined to have anything to do with Carrock. No visitors went up Carrock. No visitors came there at all. Aa' the world ganged awa' yon. The driver appealed to the Innkeeper. The Innkeeper had two men working in the fields, and one of them should be called in, to go up Carrock as guide. Messrs. Idle and Goodchild highly approving, entered the Innkeeper's house, to drink whiskey and eat oatcake.

The Innkeeper was not idle enough—was not idle at all, which was a great fault in him—but was a fine specimen of a north-country man, or any kind of man. He had a ruddy cheek, a bright eye, a well-knit frame, an immense hand, a cheery, outspeaking voice, and a straight, bright, broad look. He had a drawing-room, too, upstairs, which was worth a visit to the Cumberland Fells. (This was Mr. Francis Goodchild's opinion, in which Mr. Thomas Idle did not concur.)

The ceiling of this drawing-room was so crossed and re-crossed by beams of unequal lengths, radiating from a centre, in a corner, that it looked like a broken starfish. The room was comfortably and solidly furnished with good mahogany and horsehair. It had a snug fireside, and a couple of well-curtained windows, looking out upon the wild country behind the house. What it most developed was, an unexpected taste for little ornaments and nick-nacks, of which it contained a most surprising number. They were not very various, consisting in great part of waxen babies with their limbs more or less mutilated, appealing on one leg to the parental affections from under little cupping-glasses; but, Uncle Tom was there, in crockery, receiving theological instructions from Miss Eva, who grew out of his side like a wen, in an exceedingly rough state of profile propagandism. Engravings of

Mr. Hunt's country boy, before and after his pie, were on the wall, divided by a highly-coloured nautical piece, the subject of which had all her colours (and more) flying, and was making great way through a sea of a regular pattern, like a lady's collar. A benevolent, elderly gentleman of the last century, with a powdered head, kept guard, in oil and varnish, over a most perplexing piece of furniture on a table; in appearance between a driving seat and an angular knife-box, but, when opened, a musical instrument of tinkling wires, exactly like David's harp packed for travelling. Everything became a nick-nack in this curious room. The copper tea-kettle, burnished up to the highest point of glory, took his station on a stand of his own at the greatest possible distance from the fireplace, and said: 'By your leave, not a kettle, but a bijou.' The Staffordshire-ware butter-dish with the cover on, got upon a little round occasional table in a window, with a worked top, and announced itself to the two chairs accidentally placed there, as an aid to polite conversation, a graceful trifle in china to be chatted over by callers, as they airily trifled away the visiting moments of a butterfly existence, in that rugged old village on the Cumberland Fells. The very footstool could not keep the floor, but got upon a sofa, and therefrom proclaimed itself, in high relief of white and liver-coloured wool, a favourite spaniel coiled up for repose. Though, truly, in spite of its bright glass eyes, the spaniel was the least successful assumption in the collection: being perfectly flat, and dismally suggestive of a recent mistake in sitting down on the part of some corpulent member of the family.

There were books, too, in this room; books on the table, books on the chimney-piece, books in an open press in the corner. Fielding was there, and Smollett was there, and Steele and Addison were there, in dispersed volumes; and there were tales of those who go down to the sea in ships, for windy nights; and there was really a choice of good books for rainy days or fine. It was so very pleasant to see these things in such a lonesome by-place—so very agreeable to find these evidences of a taste, however homely, that went beyond the beautiful cleanliness and trimness of the house—so fanciful to imagine what a wonder a room must be to the little children born in the gloomy village—what grand

impressions of it those of them who became wanderers over the earth would carry away; and how, at distant ends of the world, some old voyagers would die, cherishing the belief that the finest apartment known to men was once in the Hesket-Newmarket Inn, in rare old Cumberland—it was such a charmingly lazy pursuit to entertain these rambling thoughts over the choice oatcake and genial whiskey, that Mr. Idle and Mr. Goodchild never asked themselves how it came to pass that the men in the fields were never heard of more, how the stalwart landlord replaced them without explanation, how his dog-cart came to be waiting at the door, and how everything was arranged without the least arrangement for climbing to old Carrock's shoulders, and standing on his head.

Without a word of inquiry, therefore, the Two Idle Apprentices drifted out resignedly into a fine, soft, close, drowsy, penetrating rain; got into the landlord's light dog-cart, and rattled off through the village for the foot of Carrock. The journey at the outset was not remarkable. The Cumberland road went up and down like all other roads; the Cumberland curs burst out from backs of cottages and barked like other curs, and the Cumberland peasantry stared after the dog-cart amazedly, as long as it was in sight, like the rest of their race. The approach to the foot of the mountain resembled the approaches to the feet of most other mountains all over the world. The cultivation gradually ceased, the trees grew gradually rare, the road became gradually rougher, and the sides of the mountain looked gradually more and more lofty, and more and more difficult to get up. The dog-cart was left at a lonely farm-house. The landlord borrowed a large umbrella, and assuming in an instant the character of the most cheerful and adventurous of guides, led the way to the assent. Mr. Goodchild looked eagerly at the top of the mountain, and, feeling apparently that he was now going to be very lazy indeed, shone all over wonderfully to the eye, under the influence of the contentment within and the moisture without. Only in the bosom of Mr. Thomas Idle did Despondency now hold her gloomy state. He kept it a secret; but he would have given a very handsome sum, when the ascent began, to have been back again at the inn. The sides of Carrock looked fearfully steep, and the top of Car-

rock was hidden in mist. The rain was falling faster and faster. The knees of Mr. Idle—always weak on walking excursions—shivered and shook with fear and damp. The wet was already penetrating through the young man's outer coat to a brand-new shooting-jacket, for which he had reluctantly paid the large sum of two guineas on leaving town; he had no stimulating refreshment about him but a small packet of clammy gingerbread nuts; he had nobody to give him an arm, nobody to push him gently behind, nobody to pull him up tenderly in front, nobody to speak to who really felt the difficulties of the ascent, the dampness of the rain, the denseness of the mist, and the unutterable folly of climbing, undriven, up any steep place in the world, when there is level ground within reach to walk on instead. Was it for this that Thomas had left London? London, where there are nice short walks in level public gardens, with benches of repose set up at convenient distances for weary travellers—London, where rugged stone is humanely pounded into little lumps for the road, and intelligently shaped into smooth slabs for the pavement! No! it was not for the laborious ascent of the crags of Carrock that Idle had left his native city, and travelled to Cumberland. Never did he feel more disastrously convinced that he had committed a very grave error in judgment than when he found himself standing in the rain at the bottom of a steep mountain, and knew that the responsibility rested on his weak shoulders of actually getting to the top of it.

The honest landlord went first, the beaming Goodchild followed, the mournful Idle brought up the rear. From time to time, the two foremost members of the expedition changed places in the order of march; but the rearguard never altered his position. Up the mountain or down the mountain, in the water or out of it, over the rocks, through the bogs, skirting the heather, Mr. Thomas Idle was always the last, and was always the man who had to be looked after and waited for. At first the ascent was delusively easy, the sides of the mountain sloped gradually, and the material of which they were composed was a soft spongy turf, very tender and pleasant to walk upon. After a hundred yards or so, however, the verdant scene and the easy slope disappeared, and the rocks began. Not noble, massive rocks, standing upright, keeping a

certain regularity in their positions, and possessing, now and then, flat tops to sit upon, but little irritating, comfortless rocks, littered about anyhow by Nature; treacherous, disheartening rocks of all sorts of small shapes and small sizes, bruisers of tender toes and trippers-up of wavering feet. When these impediments were passed, heather and slough followed. Here the steepness of the ascent was slightly mitigated; and here the exploring party of three turned round to look at the view below them. The scene of the moorland and the fields was like a feeble water-colour drawing half sponged out. The mist was darkening, the rain was thickening, the trees were dotted about like spots of faint shadow, the division-lines which mapped out the fields were all getting blurred together, and the lonely farmhouse where the dog-cart had been left, loomed spectral in the grey light like the last human dwelling at the end of the habitable world. Was this a sight worth climbing to see? Surely—surely not!

Up again—for the top of Carrock is not reached yet. The landlord, just as good-tempered and obliging as he was at the bottom of the mountain. Mr. Goodchild brighter in the eyes and rosier in the face than ever; full of cheerful remarks and apt quotations; and walking with a springiness of step wonderful to behold. Mr. Idle, farther and farther in the rear, with the water squeaking in the toes of his boots, with his two-guinea shooting-jacket clinging damply to his aching sides, with his overcoat so full of rain, and standing out so pyramidically stiff, in consequence, from his shoulders downwards, that he felt as if he was walking in a gigantic extinguisher—the despairing spirit within him representing but too aptly the candle that had just been put out. Up and up and up again, till a ridge is reached and the outer edge of the mist on the summit of Carrock is darkly and drizzlingly near. Is this the top? No, nothing like the top. It is an aggravating peculiarity of all mountains, that, although they have only one top when they are seen (as they ought always to be seen) from below, they turn out to have a perfect eruption of false tops whenever the traveller is sufficiently ill-advised to go out of his way for the purpose of ascending them. Carrock is but a trumpery little mountain of fifteen hundred feet, and it presumes to have false tops, and even precipices, as if it were Mont Blanc. No matter; Goodchild en-

joys it, and will go on; and Idle, who is afraid of being left behind by himself, must follow. On entering the edge of the mist, the landlord stops, and says he hopes that it will not get any thicker. It is twenty years since he last ascended Carrock, and it is barely possible, if the mist increases, that the party may be lost on the mountain. Goodchild hears this dreadful intimation, and is not in the least impressed by it. He marches for the top that is never to be found, as if he was the Wandering Jew, bound to go on for ever, in defiance of everything. The landlord faithfully accompanies him. The two, to the dim eye of Idle, far below, look in the exaggerative mist, like a pair of friendly giants, mounting the steps of some invisible castle together. Up and up, and then down a little, and then up and then along a strip of level ground, and then up again. The wind, a wind unknown in the happy valley, blows keen and strong; the rain-mist gets impenetrable; a dreary little cairn of stones appears. The landlord adds one to the heap, first walking all round the cairn as if he were about to perform an incantation, then dropping the stone on to the top of the heap with the gesture of a magician adding an ingredient to a cauldron in full bubble. Goodchild sits down by the cairn as if it was his study-table at home; Idle, drenched and panting, stands up with his back to the wind, ascertains distinctly that this is the top at last, looks round with all the little curiosity that is left in him, and gets, in return, a magnificent view of—Nothing!

The effect of this sublime spectacle on the minds of the exploring party is a little injured by the nature of the direct conclusion to which the sight of it points—the said conclusion being that the mountain mist has actually gathered round them, as the landlord feared it would. It now becomes imperatively necessary to settle the exact situation of the farm-house in the valley at which the dog-cart has been left, before the travellers attempt to descend. While the landlord is endeavouring to make this discovery in his own way, Mr. Goodchild plunges his hand under his wet coat, draws out a little red morocco-case, opens it, and displays to the view of his companions, a neat pocket-compass. The north is found, the point at which the farm-house is situated is settled, and the descent begins. After a little downward walking, Idle (behind as usual) sees his fellow-travellers turn aside sharply—tries to

follow them—loses them in the mist—is shouted after, waited for, recovered—and then finds that a halt has been ordered, partly on his account, partly for the purpose of again consulting the compass.

The point in debate is settled as before between Goodchild and the landlord, and the expedition moves on, not down the mountain, but marching straight forward round the slope of it. The difficulty of following this new route is acutely felt by Thomas Idle. He finds the hardship of walking at all greatly increased by the fatigue of moving his feet straight forward along the side of a slope, when their natural tendency, at every step, is to turn off at a right angle, and go straight down the declivity. Let the reader imagine himself to be walking along the roof of a barn, instead of up or down it, and he will have an exact idea of the pedestrian difficulty in which the travellers had now involved themselves. In ten minutes more Idle was lost in the distance again, was shouted for, waited for, recovered as before; found Goodchild repeating his observation of the compass, and remonstrated warmly against the sideway route that his companions persisted in following. It appeared to the uninstructed mind of Thomas that when three men want to get to the bottom of a mountain, their business is to walk down it; and he put this view of the case, not only with emphasis, but even with some irritability. He was answered from the scientific eminence of the compass on which his companions were mounted, that there was a frightful chasm somewhere near the foot of Carrock, called the Black Arches, into which the travellers were sure to march in the mist, if they risked continuing the descent from the place where they had now halted. Idle received this answer with the silent respect which was due to the commanders of the expedition, and followed along the roof of the barn, or rather the side of the mountain, reflecting upon the assurance which he received on starting again, that the object of the party was only to gain 'a certain point,' and, this haven attained, to continue the descent afterwards until the foot of Carrock was reached. Though quite unexceptionable as an abstract form of expression, the phrase 'a certain point' has the disadvantage of sounding rather vaguely when it is pronounced on unknown ground, under a canopy of mist much thicker than a

London fog. Nevertheless, after the compass, this phrase was all the clue the party had to hold by, and Idle clung to the extreme end of it as hopefully as he could.

More sideway walking, thicker and thicker mist; all sorts of points reached except the 'certain point'; third loss of Idle, third shouts for him, third recovery of him, third consultation of compass. Mr. Goodchild draws it tenderly from his pocket, and prepares to adjust it on a stone. Something falls on the turf—it is the glass. Something else drops immediately after—it is the needle. The compass is broken, and the exploring party is lost!

It is the practice of the English portion of the human race to receive all great disasters in dead silence. Mr. Goodchild restored the useless compass to his pocket without saying a word, Mr. Idle looked at the landlord, and the landlord looked at Mr. Idle. There was nothing for it now but to go on blindfold, and trust to the chapter of chances. Accordingly, the lost travellers moved forward, still walking round the slope of the mountain, still desperately resolved to avoid the Black Arches, and to succeed in reaching the 'certain point.'

A quarter of an hour brought them to the brink of a ravine, at the bottom of which there flowed a muddy little stream. Here another halt was called, and another consultation took place. The landlord, still clinging pertinaciously to the idea of reaching the 'point,' voted for crossing the ravine, and going on round the slope of the mountain. Mr. Goodchild, to the great relief of his fellow traveller, took another view of the case, and backed Mr. Idle's proposal to descend Carrock at once, at any hazard—the rather as the running stream was a sure guide to follow from the mountain to the valley. Accordingly, the party descended to the rugged and stony banks of the stream; and here again Thomas lost ground sadly, and fell far behind his travelling companions. Not much more than six weeks had elapsed since he had sprained one of his ankles, and he began to feel this same ankle getting rather weak when he found himself among the stones that were strewn about the running water. Goodchild and the landlord were getting farther and farther ahead of him. He saw them cross the stream and disappear round a projection on its banks. He heard them shout the moment after as a signal that they had halted

and were waiting for him. Answering the shout, he mended his pace, crossed the stream where they had crossed it, and was within one step of the opposite bank, when his foot slipped on a wet stone, his weak ankle gave a twist outwards, a hot, rending, tearing pain ran through it at the same moment, and down fell the idlest of the Two Idle Apprentices, crippled in an instant.

The situation was now, in plain terms, one of absolute danger. There lay Mr. Idle writhing with pain, there was the mist as thick as ever, there was the landlord as completely lost as the strangers whom he was conducting, and there was the compass broken in Goodchild's pocket. To leave the wretched Thomas on unknown ground was plainly impossible; and to get him to walk with a badly sprained ankle seemed equally out of the question. However, Goodchild (brought back by his cry for help) bandaged the ankle with a pocket-handkerchief, and assisted by the landlord, raised the crippled Apprentice to his legs, offered him a shoulder to lean on, and exhorted him for the sake of the whole party to try if he could walk. Thomas, assisted by the shoulder on one side, and a stick on the other, did try, with what pain and difficulty those only can imagine who have sprained an ankle and have had to tread on it afterwards. At a pace adapted to the feeble hobbling of a newly-lamed man, the lost party moved on, perfectly ignorant whether they were on the right side of the mountain or the wrong, and equally uncertain how long Idle would be able to contend with the pain in his ankle, before he gave in altogether and fell down again, unable to stir another step.

Slowly and more slowly, as the clog of crippled Thomas weighed heavily and more heavily on the march of the expedition, the lost travellers followed the windings of the stream, till they came to a faintly-marked cart-track, branching off nearly at right angles, to the left. After a little consultation it was resolved to follow this dim vestige of a road in the hope that it might lead to some farm or cottage, at which Idle could be left in safety. It was now getting on towards the afternoon, and it was fast becoming more than doubtful whether the party, delayed in their progress as they now were, might not be overtaken by the darkness before the right route was found, and be condemned to pass the night on the

mountain, without bit or drop to comfort them, in their wet clothes.

The cart-track grew fainter and fainter, until it was washed out altogether by another little stream, dark, turbulent, and rapid. The landlord suggested, judging by the colour of the water, that it must be flowing from one of the lead mines in the neighbourhood of Carrock; and the travellers accordingly kept by the stream for a little while, in the hope of possibly wandering towards help in that way. After walking forward about two hundred yards, they came upon a mine indeed, but a mine, exhausted and abandoned; a dismal, ruinous place, with nothing but the wreck of its works and buildings left to speak for it. Here, there were a few sheep feeding. The landlord looked at them earnestly, thought he recognised the marks on them—then thought he did not—finally gave up the sheep in despair—and walked on just as ignorant of the whereabouts of the party as ever.

The march in the dark, literally as well as metaphorically in the dark, had now been continued for three-quarters of an hour from the time when the crippled Apprentice had met with his accident. Mr. Idle, with all the will to conquer the pain in his ankle, and to hobble on, found the power rapidly failing him, and felt that another ten minutes at most would find him at the end of his last physical resources. He had just made up his mind on this point, and was about to communicate the dismal result of his reflections to his companions, when the mist suddenly brightened, and begun to lift straight ahead. In another minute, the landlord, who was in advance, proclaimed that he saw a tree. Before long, other trees appeared—then a cottage—then a house beyond the cottage, and a familiar line of road rising behind it. Last of all, Carrock itself loomed darkly into view, far away to the right hand. The party had not only got down the mountain without knowing how, but had wandered away from it in the mist, without knowing why—away, far down on the very moor by which they had approached the base of Carrock that morning.

The happy lifting of the mist, and the still happier discovery that the travellers had groped their way, though by a very roundabout direction, to within a mile or so of the part of the valley in which the farm-house was situated, restored Mr. Idle's sinking

spirits and reanimated his failing strength. While the landlord ran off to get the dog-cart, Thomas was assisted by Goodchild to the cottage which had been the first building seen when the darkness brightened, and was propped up against the garden wall, like an artist's lay figure waiting to be forwarded, until the dog-cart should arrive from the farm-house below. In due time—and a very long time it seemed to Mr. Idle—the rattle of wheels was heard, and the crippled Apprentice was lifted into the seat. As the dog-cart was driven back to the inn, the landlord related an anecdote which he had just heard at the farm-house, of an unhappy man who had been lost, like his two guests and himself, on Carrock; who had passed the night there alone; who had been found the next morning, 'scared and starved'; and who never went out afterwards, except on his way to the grave. Mr. Idle heard this sad story, and derived at least one useful impression from it. Bad as the pain in his ankle was, he contrived to bear it patiently, for he felt grateful that a worse accident had not befallen him in the wilds of Carrock.

CHAPTER II

The dog-cart, with Mr. Thomas Idle and his ankle on the hanging seat behind, Mr. Francis Goodchild and the Innkeeper in front, and the rain in spouts and splashes everywhere, made the best of its way back to the little inn; the broken moor country looking like miles upon miles of Pre-Adamite sop, or the ruins of some enormous jorum of antediluvian toast-and-water. The trees dripped; the eaves of the scattered cottages dripped; the barren stone walls dividing the land, dripped; the yelping dogs dripped; carts and waggons under ill-roofed penthouses, dripped; melancholy cocks and hens perching on their shafts, or seeking shelter underneath them, dripped; Mr. Goodchild dripped; Thomas Idle dripped; the Innkeeper dripped; the mare dripped; the vast curtains of mist and cloud passed before the shadowy forms of the hills, streamed water as they were drawn across the landscape. Down such steep pitches that the mare seemed to be trotting on

her head, and up such steep pitches that she seemed to have a supplementary leg in her tail, the dog-cart jolted and tilted back to the village. It was too wet for the women to look out, it was too wet even for the children to look out; all the doors and windows were closed, and the only sign of life or motion was in the rain-punctured puddles.

Whiskey and oil to Thomas Idle's ankle, and whiskey without oil to Francis Goodchild's stomach, produced an agreeable change in the systems of both; soothing Mr. Idle's pain, which was sharp before, and sweetening Mr. Goodchild's temper, which was sweet before. Portmanteaus being then opened and clothes changed, Mr. Goodchild, though having no change of outer garments but broadcloth and velvet, suddenly became a magnificent portent in the Innkeeper's house, a shining frontispiece to the fashions for the month, and a frightful anomaly in the Cumberland village.

Greatly ashamed of his splendid appearance, the conscious Goodchild quenched it as much as possible, in the shadow of Thomas Idle's ankle, and in a corner of the little covered carriage that started with them for Wigton—a most desirable carriage for any country, except for its having a flat roof and no sides; which caused the plumps of rain accumulating on the roof to play vigorous games of bagatelle into the interior all the way, and to score immensely. It was comfortable to see how the people coming back in open carts from Wigton market made no more of the rain than if it were sunshine; how the Wigton policeman taking a country walk of half a dozen miles (apparently for pleasure), in resplendent uniform, accepted saturation as his normal state; how clerks and schoolmasters in black, loitered along the road without umbrellas, getting varnished at every step; how the Cumberland girls, coming out to look after the Cumberland cows, shook the rain from their eyelashes and laughed it away; and how the rain continued to fall upon all, as it only does fall in hill countries.

Wigton market was over, and its bare booths were smoking with rain all down the street. Mr. Thomas Idle, melodramatically carried to the inn's first floor, and laid upon three chairs (he should have had the sofa, if there had been one), Mr. Goodchild

went to the window to take an observation of Wigton, and report what he saw to his disabled companion.

'Brother Francis, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'what do you see from the turret?'

'I see,' said Brother Francis, 'what I hope and believe to be one of the most dismal places ever seen by eyes. I see the houses with their roofs of dull black, their stained fronts, and their dark-rimmed windows, looking as if they were all in mourning. As every little puff of wind comes down the street, I see a perfect train of rain let off along the wooden stalls in the market-place and exploded against me. I see a very big gas lamp in the centre which I know, by a secret instinct, will not be lighted to-night. I see a pump, with a trivet underneath its spout whereon to stand the vessels that are brought to be filled with water. I see a man come to pump, and he pumps very hard, but no water follows, and he strolls empty away.'

'Brother Francis, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'what more do you see from the turret, besides the man, and the pump, and the trivet and the houses all in mourning and the rain?'

'I see,' said Brother Francis, 'one, two, three, four, five, linen-drapers' shops in front of me. I see a linen-draper's shop next door to the right—and there are five more linen-drapers' shops down the corner to the left. Eleven homicidal linen-drapers' shops within a short stone's throw, each with its hands at the throats of all the rest! Over the small first-floor of one of these linen-drapers' shops appears the wonderful inscription, BANK.'

'Brother Francis, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'what more do you see from the turret, besides the eleven homicidal linen-drapers' shops, and the wonderful inscription "Bank," on the small first-floor, and the man and the pump and the trivet and the houses all in mourning and the rain?'

'I see,' said Brother Francis, 'the depository of Christian Knowledge, and through the dark vapour I think I again make out Mr. Spurgeon looming heavily. Her Majesty the Queen, God bless her, printed in colours, I am sure I see. I see the *Illustrated London News* of several years ago, and I see a sweetmeat shop—which the proprietor calls a "Salt Warehouse"—with one small female child in a cotton bonnet looking in on tip-toe, oblivious of

rain. And I see a watchmaker's with only three great pale watches of a dull metal hanging in his window, each in a separate pane.'

'Brother Francis, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'what more do you see of Wigton, besides these objects, and the man and the pump and the trivet and the houses all in mourning and the rain?'

'I see nothing more,' said Brother Francis, 'and there is nothing more to see, except the curlpaper bill of the theatre, which was opened and shut last week (the manager's family played all the parts), and the short, square, chinky omnibus that goes to the railway, and leads too rattling a life over the stones to hold together long. O yes! Now, I see two men with their hands in their pockets and their backs towards me.'

'Brother Francs, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'what do you make out from the turret, of the expression of the two men with their hands in their pockets and their backs towards you?'

'They are mysterious men,' said Brother Francis, 'with inscrutable backs. They keep their backs towards me with persistency. If one turns an inch in any direction, the other turns an inch in the same direction, and no more. They turn very stiffly, on a very little pivot, in the middle of the market-place. Their appearance is partly of a mining, partly of a ploughing, partly of a stable character. They are looking at nothing—very hard. Their backs are slouched, and their legs are curved with much standing about. Their pockets are loose and dog's-eared, on account of their hands being always in them. They stand to be rained upon, without any movement of impatience or dissatisfaction, and they keep so close together that an elbow of each jostles an elbow of the other, but they never speak. They spit at times, but speak not. I see it growing darker and darker, and still I see them, sole visible population of the place, standing to be rained upon with their backs towards me, and looking at nothing very hard.'

'Brother Francis, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'before you draw down the blind of the turret and come in to have your head scorched by the hot gas, see if you can, and impart to me, something of the expression of those two amazing men.'

'The murky shadows,' said Francis Goodchild, 'are gathering fast; and the wings of evening, and the wings of coal, are folding

over Wigton. Still, they look at nothing very hard, with their backs towards me. Ah! Now, they turn, and I see—'

'Brother Francis, brother Francis,' cried Thomas Idle, 'tell me quickly what you see of the two men of Wigton!'

'I see,' said Francis Goodchild, 'that they have no expression at all. And now the town goes to sleep, undazzled by the large unlighted lamp in the market-place; and let no man wake it.'

At the close of the next day's journey, Mr. Thomas Idle's ankle became much swollen and inflamed. There are reasons which will presently explain themselves for not publicly indicating the exact direction in which that journey lay, or the place in which it ended. It was a long day's shaking of Thomas Idle over the rough roads, and a long day's getting out and going on before the horses, and fagging up hills, and scouring down hills, on the part of Mr. Goodchild, who in the fatigues of such labours congratulated himself on attaining a high point of idleness. It was at a little town, still in Cumberland, that they halted for the night—a very little town, with the purple and brown moor close upon its one street; a curious little ancient market-cross set up in the midst of it; and the town itself lookng much as if it were a collection of great stones piled on end by the Druids long ago, which a few recluse people had since hollowed out for habitations.

'Is there a doctor here?' asked Mr. Goodchild, on his knee, of the motherly landlady of the little Inn: stopping in his examination of Mr. Idle's ankle, with the aid of a candle.

'Ey, my word!' said the landlady, glancing doubtfully at the ankle for herself; 'there 's Doctor Speddie.'

'Is he a good Doctor?'

'Ey!' said the landlady, 'I ca' him so. A' cooms afther nae doctor that I ken. Mair nor which, a 's just THE doctor heer.'

'Do you think he is at home?'

Her reply was, 'Gang awa', Jock, and bring him.'

Jock, a white-headed boy, who, under pretence of stirring up some bay salt in a basin of water for the laving of this unfortunate ankle, had greatly enjoyed himself for the last ten minutes in splashing the carpet, set off promptly. A very few minutes had elapsed when he showed the Doctor in, by tumbling against the door before him, and bursting it open with his head.

'Gently, Jock, gently,' said the Doctor as he advanced with a quiet step. 'Gentlemen, a good evening. I am sorry that my presence is required here. A slight accident, I hope? A slip and a fall? Yes, yes, yes. Carrock, indeed? Hah! Does that pain you, sir? No doubt, it does. It is the great connecting ligament here, you see, that has been badly strained. Time and rest, sir! They are often the recipe in greater cases,' with a slight sigh, 'and often the recipe in small. I can send a lotion to relieve you, but we must leave the cure to time and rest.'

This he said, holding Idle's foot on his knee between his two hands, as he sat over against him. He had touched it tenderly and skilfully in explanation of what he said, and, when his careful examination was completed, softly returned it to its former horizontal position on a chair.

He spoke with a little irresolution whenever he began, but afterwards fluently. He was a tall, thin, large-boned, old gentleman, with an appearance at first sight of being hard-featured; but, at a second glance, the mild expression of his face and some particular touches of sweetness and patience about his mouth, corrected this impression and assigned his long professional rides, by day and night, in the bleak hill-weather, as the true cause of that appearance. He stooped very little, though past seventy and very grey. His dress was more like that of a clergyman than a country doctor, being a plain black suit, and a plain white neckkerchief tied behind like a band. His black was the worse for wear, and there were darns in his coat, and his linen was a little frayed at the hems and edges. He might have been poor—it was likely enough in that out-of-the-way spot—or he might have been a little self-forgetful and eccentric. Any one could have seen directly, that he had neither wife nor child at home. He had a scholarly air with him, and that kind of considerate humanity towards others which claimed a gentle consideration for himself. Mr. Goodchild made this study of him while he was examining the limb, and as he laid it down. Mr. Goodchild wishes to add that he considers it a very good likeness.

It came out in the course of a little conversation, that Doctor Speddie was acquainted with some friends of Thomas Idle's, and had, when a young man, passed some years in Thomas Idle's

birthplace on the other side of England. Certain idle labours, the fruit of Mr. Goodchild's apprenticeship, also happened to be well known to him. The lazy travellers were thus placed on a more intimate footing with the Doctor than the casual circumstances of the meeting would of themselves have established; and when Doctor Speddie rose to go home, remarking that he would send his assistant with the lotion, Francis Goodchild said that was unnecessary, for, by the Doctor's leave, he would accompany him, and bring it back. (Having done nothing to fatigue himself for a full quarter of an hour, Francis began to fear that he was not in a state of idleness.)

Doctor Speddie politely assented to the proposition of Francis Goodchild, 'as it would give him the pleasure of enjoying a few more minutes of Mr. Goodchild's society than he could otherwise have hoped for,' and they went out together into the village street. The rain had nearly ceased, the clouds had broken before a cool wind from the north-east, and stars were shining from the peaceful heights beyond them.

Doctor Speddie's house was the last house in the place. Beyond it, lay the moor, all dark and lonesome. The wind moaned in a low, dull, shivering manner round the little garden, like a houseless creature that knew the winter was coming. It was exceedingly wild and solitary. 'Roses,' said the Doctor, when Goodchild touched some wet leaves overhanging the stone porch; 'but they get cut to pieces.'

The Doctor opened the door with a key he carried, and led the way into a low but pretty ample hall with rooms on either side. The door of one of these stood open, and the Doctor entered it, with a word of welcome to his guest. It, too, was a low room, half surgery and half parlour, with shelves of books and bottles against the walls, which were of a very dark hue. There was a fire in the grate, the night being damp and chill. Leaning against the chimney-piece looking down into it, stood the Doctor's Assistant.

A man of a most remarkable appearance. Much older than Mr. Goodchild had expected, for he was at least two-and-fifty; but, that was nothing. What was startling in him was his remarkable paleness. His large black eyes, his sunken cheeks, his long and heavy iron-grey hair, his wasted hands, and even the attenuation

of his figure, were at first forgotten in his extraordinary pallor. There was no vestige of colour in the man. When he turned his face, Francis Goodchild started as if a stone figure had looked round at him.

'Mr. Lorn,' said the Doctor. 'Mr. Goodchild.'

The Assistant, in a distraught way—as if he had forgotten something—as if he had forgotten everything even to his own name and himself—acknowledged the visitor's presence, and stepped further back into the shadow of the wall behind him. But, he was so pale that his face stood out in relief against the dark wall, and really could not be hidden so.

'Mr. Goodchild's friend has met with an accident, Lorn,' said Doctor Speddie. 'We want the lotion for a bad sprain.'

A pause.

'My dear fellow, you are more than usually absent to-night. The lotion for a bad sprain.'

'Ah! yes! Directly.'

He was evidently relieved to turn away, and to take his white face and his wild eyes to a table in a recess among the bottles. But, though he stood there, compounding the lotion with his back towards them, Goodchild could not, for many moments, withdraw his gaze from the man. When he at length did so, he found the Doctor observing him, with some trouble in his face. 'He is absent,' explained the Doctor, in a low voice. 'Always absent. Very absent.'

'Is he ill?'

'No, not ill.'

'Unhappy?'

'I have my suspicions that he was,' assented the Doctor, 'once.'

Francis Goodchild could not but observe that the Doctor accompanied these words with a benignant and protecting glance at their subject, in which there was much of the expression with which an attached father might have looked at a heavily afflicted son. Yet, that they were not father and son must have been plain to most eyes. The Assistant, on the other hand, turning presently to ask the Doctor some question, looked at him with a wan smile as if he were his whole reliance and sustainment in life.

It was in vain for the Doctor in his easy-chair, to try to lead

the mind of Mr. Goodchild in the opposite easy-chair, away from what was before him. Let Mr. Goodchild do what he would to follow the Doctor, his eyes and thoughts reverted to the Assistant. The Doctor soon perceived it, and, after falling silent, and musing in a little perplexity, said:

'Lorn!'

'My dear Doctor.'

'Would you go to the Inn, and apply that lotion? You will show the best way of applying it, far better than Mr. Goodchild can.'

'With pleasure.'

The Assistant took his hat, and passed like a shadow to the door.

'Lorn!' said the Doctor, calling after him.

He returned.

'Mr. Goodchild will keep me company till you come home. Don't hurry. Excuse my calling you back.'

'It is not,' said the Assistant, with his former smile, 'the first time you have called me back, dear Doctor.' With those words he went away.

'Mr. Goodchild,' said Doctor Speddie, in a low voice, and with his former troubled expression of face, 'I have seen that your attention has been concentrated on my friend.'

'He fascinates me. I must apologise to you, but he has quite bewildered and mastered me.'

'I find that a lonely existence and a long secret,' said the Doctor, drawing his chair a little nearer to Mr. Goodchild's, 'become in the course of time very heavy. I will tell you something. You may make what use you will of it, under fictitious names. I know I may trust you. I am the more inclined to confidence tonight, through having been unexpectedly led back, by the current of our conversation at the Inn, to scenes in my early life. Will you please to draw a little nearer?'

Mr. Goodchild drew a little nearer, and the Doctor went on thus: speaking, for the most part, in so cautious a voice, that the wind, though it was far from high, occasionally got the better of him.

When this present nineteenth century was younger by a good

many years than it is now, a certain friend of mine, named Arthur Holliday, happened to arrive in the town of Doncaster, exactly in the middle of a race-week, or, in other words, in the middle of the month of September. He was one of those reckless, rattle-pated, open-hearted, and open-mouthed young gentlemen, who possess the gift of familiarity in its highest perfection, and who scramble carelessly along the journey of life making friends, as the phrase is, wherever they go. His father was a rich manufacturer, and had bought landed property enough in one of the midland counties to make all the born squires in his neighbourhood thoroughly envious of him. Arthur was his only son, possessor in prospect of the great estate and the great business after his father's death; well supplied with money, and not too rigidly looked after, during his father's lifetime. Report, or scandal, whichever you please, said that the old gentleman had been rather wild in his youthful days, and that, unlike most parents, he was not disposed to be violently indignant when he found that his son took after him. This may be true or not. I myself only knew the elder Mr. Holliday when he was getting on in years; and then he was as quiet and as respectable a gentleman as ever I met with.

Well, one September, as I told you, young Arthur comes to Doncaster, having decided all of a sudden, in his hare-brained way, that he would go to the races. He did not reach the town till towards the close of the evening, and he went at once to see about his dinner and bed at the principal hotel. Dinner they were ready enough to give him; but as for a bed, they laughed when he mentioned it. In the race-week at Doncaster, it is no uncommon thing for visitors who have not bespoken apartments, to pass the night in their carriages at the inn doors. As for the lower sort of strangers, I myself have often seen them, at that full time, sleeping out on the doorsteps for want of a covered place to creep under. Rich as he was, Arthur's chance of getting a night's lodging (seeing that he had not written beforehand to secure one) was more than doubtful. He tried the second hotel, and the third hotel, and two of the inferior inns after that; and was met everywhere by the same form of answer. No accommodation for the night of any sort was left. All the bright golden sovereigns in

his pocket would not buy him a bed at Doncaster in the race-week.

To a young fellow of Arthur's temperament, the novelty of being turned away into the street, like a penniless vagabond, at every house where he asked for a lodging, presented itself in the light of a new and highly amusing piece of experience. He went on, with his carpet-bag in his hand, applying for a bed at every place of entertainment for travellers that he could find in Doncaster, until he wandered into the outskirts of the town. By this time, the last glimmer of twilight had faded out, the moon was rising dimly in a mist, the wind was getting cold, the clouds were gathering heavily, and there was every prospect that it was soon going to rain.

The look of the night had rather a lowering effect on young Holliday's good spirits. He began to contemplate the houseless situation in which he was placed, from the serious rather than the humorous point of view; and he looked about him, for another public-house to inquire at, with something very like downright anxiety in his mind on the subject of a lodging for the night. The suburban part of the town towards which he had now strayed was hardly lighted at all, and he could see nothing of the houses as he passed them, except that they got progressively smaller and dirtier, the farther he went. Down the winding road before him shone the dull gleam of an oil lamp, the one faint, lonely light that struggled ineffectually with the foggy darkness all round him. He resolved to go on as far as this lamp, and then, if it showed him nothing in the shape of an Inn, to return to the central part of the town and to try if he could not at least secure a chair to sit down on, through the night, at one of the principal Hotels.

As he got near the lamp, he heard voices; and, walking close under it, found that it lighted the entrance to a narrow court, on the wall of which was painted a long hand in faded flesh-colour, pointing with a lean forefinger, to this inscription:—

THE TWO ROBINS

Arthur turned into the court without hesitation, to see what The Two Robins could do for him. Four or five men were standing

together round the door of the house which was at the bottom of the court, facing the entrance from the street. The men were all listening to one other man, better dressed than the rest, who was telling his audience something, in a low voice, in which they were apparently very much interested.

On entering the passage, Arthur was passed by a stranger with a knapsack in his hand, who was evidently leaving the house.

'No,' said the traveller with the knapsack, turning round and addressing himself cheerfully to a fat, sly-looking, bald-headed man, with a dirty white apron on, who had followed him down the passage. 'No, Mr. Landlord, I am not easily scared by trifles; but, I don't mind confessing that I can't quite stand *that*.'

It occurred to young Holliday, the moment he heard these words, that the stranger had been asked an exorbitant price for a bed at The Two Robins; and that he was unable or unwilling to pay it. The moment his back was turned, Arthur, comfortably conscious of his own well-filled pockets, addressed himself in a great hurry, for fear any other benighted traveller should slip in and forestall him, to the sly-looking landlord with the dirty apron and the bald head.

'If you have got a bed to let,' he said, 'and if that gentleman who has just gone out won't pay your price for it, I will.'

The sly landlord looked hard at Arthur.

'Will you, sir?' he asked, in a meditative, doubtful way.

'Name your price,' said young Holliday, thinking that the landlord's hesitation sprang from some boorish distrust of him. 'Name your price, and I 'll give you the money at once if you like?'

'Are you game for five shillings?' inquired the landlord, rubbing his stubby double chin, and looking up thoughtfully at the ceiling above him.

Arthur nearly laughed in the man's face; but thinking it prudent to control himself, offered the five shillings as seriously as he could. The sly landlord held out his hand, then suddenly drew it back again.

'You 're acting all fair and above-board by me,' he said: 'and before I take your money, I 'll do the same by you. Look here, this is how it stands. You can have a bed all to yourself for five

shillings; but you can't have more than a half-share of the room it stands in. Do you see what I mean, young gentleman?'

'Of course I do,' returned Arthur, a little irritably. 'You mean that it is a double-bedded room, and that one of the beds is occupied?'

The landlord nodded his head, and rubbed his double chin harder than ever. Arthur hesitated, and mechanically moved back a step or two towards the door. The idea of sleeping in the same room with a total stranger, did not present an attractive prospect to him. He felt more than half inclined to drop his five shillings into his pocket, and to go out into the street once more.

'Is it yes, or no?' asked the landlord. 'Settle it as quick as you can, because there 's lots of people wanting a bed at Doncaster to-night, besides you.'

Arthur looked towards the court, and heard the rain falling heavily in the street outside. He thought he would ask a question or two before he rashly decided on leaving the shelter of The Two Robins.

'What sort of a man is it who has got the other bed?' he inquired. 'Is he a gentleman? I mean, is he a quiet, well-behaved person?'

'The quietest man I ever came across,' said the landlord, rubbing his fat hands stealthily one over the other. 'As sober as a judge, and as regular as clock-work in his habits. It hasn't struck nine, not ten minutes ago, and he 's in his bed already. I don't know whether that comes up to your notion of a quiet man: it goes a long way ahead of mine, I can tell you.'

'Is he asleep, do you think?' asked Arthur.

'I know he 's asleep,' returned the landlord. 'And what 's more, he 's gone off so fast, that I 'll warrant you don't wake him. This way, sir,' said the landlord, speaking over young Holliday's shoulder, as if he was addressing some new guest who was approaching the house.

'Here you are,' said Arthur, determined to be beforehand with the stranger, whoever he might be. 'I 'll take the bed.' And he handed the five shillings to the landlord, who nodded, dropped the money carelessly into his waistcoat-pocket, and lighted the candle.

'Come up and see the room,' said the host of The Two Robins, leading the way to the staircase quite briskly, considering how fat he was.

They mounted to the second-floor of the house. The landlord half opened a door, fronting the landing, then stopped, and turned round to Arthur.

'It 's a fair bargain, mind, on my side as well as on yours,' he said. 'You give me five shillings, I give you in return a clean, comfortable bed; and I warrant, beforehand, that you won't be interfered with, or annoyed in any way, by the man who sleeps in the same room as you.' Saying those words, he looked hard, for a moment, in young Holliday's face, and then led the way into the room.

It was larger and cleaner than Arthur had expected it would be. The two beds stood parallel with each other—a space of about six feet intervening between them. They were both of the same medium size, and both had the same plain white curtains, made to draw, if necessary, all round them. The occupied bed was the bed nearest the window. The curtains were all draw round this, except the half curtain at the bottom, on the side of the bed farthest from the window. Arthur saw the feet of the sleeping man raising the scanty clothes into a sharp little eminence, as if he was lying flat on his back. He took the candle, and advanced softly to draw the curtain—stopped half-way, and listened for a moment—then turned to the landlord.

'He 's a very quiet sleeper,' said Arthur.

'Yes,' said the landlord, 'very quiet.'

Young Holliday advanced with the candle, and looked in at the man cautiously.

'How pale he is!' said Arthur.

'Yes,' returned the landlord, 'pale enough, isn't he?'

Arthur looked closer at the man. The bedclothes were drawn up to his chin, and they lay perfectly still over the region of his chest. Surprised and vaguely startled, as he noticed this, Arthur stooped down closer over the stranger; looked at his ashy, parted lips; listened breathlessly for an instant; looked again at the strangely still face, and the motionless lips and chest; and turned

round suddenly on the landlord, with his own cheeks as pale for the moment as the hollow cheeks of the man on the bed.

'Come here,' he whispered, under his breath. 'Come here, for God's sake! The man 's not asleep—he is dead!'

'You have found that out sooner than I thought you would,' said the landlord, composedly. 'Yes, he 's dead, sure enough. He died at five o'clock to-day.'

'How did he die? Who is he?' asked Arthur, staggered, for a moment, by the audacious coolness of the answer.

'As to who is he,' rejoined the landlord, 'I know no more about him than you do. There are his books and letters and things, all sealed up in that brown-paper parcel, for the Coroner's inquest to open tomorrow or next day. He 's been here a week, paying his way fairly enough, and stopping in-doors, for the most part, as if he was ailing. My girl brought him up his tea at five to-day; and as he was pouring of it out, he fell down in a faint, or a fit, or a compound of both, for anything I know. We could not bring him to—and I said he was dead. And the doctor couldn't bring him to—and the doctor said he was dead. And there he is. And the Coroner's inquest 's coming as soon as it can. And that 's as much as I know about it.'

Arthur held the candle close to the man's lips. The flame still burnt straight up, as steadily as before. There was a moment of silence; and the rain pattered drearily through it against the panes of the window.

'If you haven't got nothing more to say to me,' continued the landlord, 'I suppose I may go. You don't expect your five shillings back, do you? There 's the bed I promised you, clean and comfortable. There 's the man I warranted not to disturb you, quiet in this world for ever. If you 're frightened to stop alone with him, that 's not my look out. I 've kept my part of the bargain, and I mean to keep the money. I 'm not Yorkshire, myself, young gentleman; but I 've lived long enough in these parts to have my wits sharpened; and I shouldn't wonder if you found out the way to brighten up yours, next time you come amongst us.' With these words, the landlord turned towards the door, and laughed to himself softly, in high satisfaction at his own sharpness.

Startled and shocked as he was, Arthur had by this time suffi

ciently recovered himself to feel indignant at the trick that had been played on him, and at the insolent manner in which the landlord exulted in it.

'Don't laugh,' he said sharply, 'till you are quite sure you have got the laugh against me. You shan't have the five shillings for nothing, my man. I'll keep the bed.'

'Will you?' said the landlord. 'Then I wish you a good night's rest.' With that brief farewell, he went out, and shut the door after him.

A good night's rest! The words had hardly been spoken, the door had hardly been closed, before Arthur half-repented the hasty words that had just escaped him. Though not naturally over-sensitive, and not wanting in courage of the moral as well as the physical sort, the presence of the dead man had an instantaneously chilling effect on his mind when he found himself alone in the room—alone, and bound by his own rash words to stay there till the next morning. An older man would have thought nothing of those words, and would have acted, without reference to them, as his calmer sense suggested. But Arthur was too young to treat the ridicule, even of his inferiors, with contempt—too young not to fear the momentary humiliation of falsifying his own foolish boast, more than he feared the trial of watching out the long night in the same chamber with the dead.

'It is but a few hours,' he thought to himself, 'and I can get away the first thing in the morning.'

He was looking towards the occupied bed as that idea passed through his mind, and the sharp, angular eminence made in the clothes by the dead man's upturned feet again caught his eye. He advanced and drew the curtains, purposely abstaining, as he did so, from looking at the face of the corpse, lest he might unnerve himself at the outset by fastening some ghastly impression of it on his mind. He drew the curtain very gently, and sighed involuntarily as he closed it. 'Poor fellow,' he said, almost as sadly as if he had known the man. 'Ah, poor fellow!'

He went next to the window. The night was black, and he could see nothing from it. The rain still pattered heavily against the glass. He inferred, from hearing it, that the window was at

the back of the house; remembering that the front was sheltered from the weather by the court and the buildings over it.

While he was still standing at the window—for even the dreary rain was a relief, because of the sound it made; a relief, also because it moved, and had some faint suggestion, in consequence of life and companionship in it—while he was standing at the window, and looking vacantly into the black darkness outside, he heard a distant church-clock strike ten. Only ten! How was he to pass the time till the house was astir the next morning?

Under any other circumstances, he would have gone down to the public-house parlour, would have called for his grog, and would have laughed and talked with the company assembled as familiarly as if he had known them all his life. But the very thought of whiling away the time in this manner was distasteful to him. The new situation in which he was placed seemed to have altered him to himself already. Thus far, his life had been the common, trifling, prosaic, surface-life of a prosperous young man, with no troubles to conquer, and no trials to face. He had lost no relation whom he loved, no friend whom he treasured. Till this night, what share he had of the immortal inheritance that is divided amongst us all, had laid dormant within him. Till this night, Death and he had not once met, even in thought.

He took a few turns up and down the room—then stopped. The noise made by his boots on the poorly carpeted floor, jarred on his ear. He hesitated a little, and ended by taking the boots off, and walking backwards and forwards noiselessly. All desire to sleep or to rest had left him. The bare thought of lying down on the unoccupied bed instantly drew the picture on his mind of a dreadful mimicry of the position of the dead man. Who was he? What was the story of his past life? Poor he must have been, or he would not have stopped at such a place as The Two Robins Inn—and weakened, probably, by long illness, or he could hardly have died in the manner in which the landlord had described. Poor, ill, lonely,—dead in a strange place; dead, with nobody but a stranger to pity him. A sad story: truly, on the mere face of it, a very sad story.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he had stopped insensibly at the window, close to which stood the foot of

the bed with the closed curtains. At first he looked at it absently; then he became conscious that his eyes were fixed on it; and then, a perverse desire took possession of him to do the very thing which he had resolved not to do, up to this time—to look at the dead man.

He stretched out his hand towards the curtains; but checked himself in the very act of undrawing them, turned his back sharply on the bed, and walked towards the chimney-piece, to see what things were placed on it, and to try if he could keep the dead man out of his mind in that way.

There was a pewter inkstand on the chimney-piece, with some mildewed remains of ink in the bottle. There were two coarse china ornaments of the commonest kind; and there was a square of embossed card, dirty and fly-blown, with a collection of wretched riddles printed on it, in all sorts of zig-zag directions, and in variously coloured inks. He took the card, and went away, to read it, to the table on which the candle was placed; sitting down, with his back resolutely turned to the curtained bed.

He read the first riddle, the second, the third, all in one corner of the card—then turned it round impatiently to look at another. Before he could begin reading the riddles printed here, the sound of the church-clock stopped him. Eleven. He had got through an hour of the time, in the room with the dead man.

Once more he looked at the card. It was not easy to make out the letters printed on it, in consequence of the dimness of the light which the landlord had left him—a common tallow candle, furnished with a pair of heavy old-fashioned steel snuffers. Up to this time, his mind had been too much occupied to think of the light. He had left the wick of the candle unsnuffed, till it had risen higher than the flame, and had burnt into an odd pent-house shape at the top, from which morsels of the charred cotton fell off, from time to time, in little flakes. He took up the snuffers now, and trimmed the wick. The light brightened directly, and the room became less dismal.

Again he turned to the riddles; reading them doggedly and resolutely, now in one corner of the card, now in another. All his efforts, however, could not fix his attention on them. He pursued his occupation mechanically, deriving no sort of impression from

what he was reading. It was as if a shadow from the curtained bed had got between his mind and the gaily printed letters—a shadow that nothing could dispel. At last, he gave up the struggle, and threw the card from him impatiently, and took to walking softly up and down the room again.

The dead man, the dead man, the *hidden* dead man on the bed! There was the one persistent idea still haunting him. Hidden? Was it only the body being there, or was it the body being there, concealed, that was preying on his mind? He stopped at the window, with that doubt in him; once more listening to the pattering rain, once more looking out into the black darkness.

Still the dead man! The darkness forced his mind back upon itself, and set his memory at work, reviving, with a painfully-vivid distinctness the momentary impression it had received from the first sight of the corpse. Before long the face seemed to be hovering out in the middle of the darkness, confronting him through the window, with the paleness whiter, with the dreadful dull line of light between the imperfectly-closed eyelids broader than he had seen it—with the parted lips slowly dropping farther and farther away from each other—with the features growing larger and moving closer, till they seemed to fill the window and to silence the rain, and to shut out the night.

The sound of a voice, shouting below-stairs, woke him suddenly from the dream of his own distempered fancy. He recognised it as the voice of the landlord. 'Shut up at twelve, Ben,' he heard it say. 'I 'm off to bed.'

He wiped away the damp that had gathered on his forehead, reasoned with himself for a little while, and resolved to shake his mind free of the ghastly counterfeit which still clung to it, by forcing himself to confront, if it was only for a moment, the solemn reality. Without allowing himself an instant to hesitate, he parted the curtains at the foot of the bed, and looked through.

There was a sad, peaceful, white face, with the awful mystery of stillness on it, laid back upon the pillow. No stir, no change there! He only looked at it for a moment before he closed the curtains again—but that moment steadied him, calmed him, restored him—mind and body—to himself.

He returned to his old occupation of walking up and down the

room; persevering in it, this time, till the clock struck again. Twelve.

As the sound of the clock-bell died away, it was succeeded by the confused noise, downstairs, of the drinkers in the tap-room leaving the house. The next sound, after an interval of silence, was caused by the barring of the door, and the closing of the shutters, at the back of the Inn. Then the silence followed again, and was disturbed no more.

He was alone now—absolutely, utterly, alone with the dead man, till the next morning.

The wick of the candle wanted trimming again. He took up the snuffers—but paused suddenly on the very point of using them, and looked attentively at the candle—then back, over his shoulder, at the curtained bed—then again at the candle. It had been lighted, for the first time, to show him the way upstairs, and three parts of it, at least, were already consumed. In another hour it would be burnt out. In another hour—unless he called at once to the man who had shut up the Inn, for a fresh candle—he would be left in the dark.

Strongly as his mind had been affected since he had entered his room, his unreasonable dread of encountering ridicule, and of exposing his courage to suspicion, had not altogether lost its influence over him, even yet. He lingered irresolutely by the table, waiting till he could prevail on himself to open the door, and call, from the landing, to the man who had shut up the Inn. In his present hesitating frame of mind, it was a kind of relief to gain a few moments only by engaging in the trifling occupation of snuffing the candle. His hand trembled a little, and the snuffers were heavy and awkward to use. When he closed them on the wick, he closed them a hair's breadth too low. In an instant the candle was out, and the room was plunged in pitch darkness.

The one impression which the absence of light immediately produced on his mind, was distrust of the curtained bed—distrust which shaped itself into no distinct idea, but which was powerful enough, in its very vagueness, to bind him down to his chair, to make his heart beat fast, and to set him listening intently. No sound stirred in the room but the familiar sound of the rain

against the window, louder and sharper now than he had heard it yet.

Still the vague distrust, the inexpressible dread possessed him, and kept him to his chair. He had put his carpet-bag on the table, when he first entered the room; and he now took the key from his pocket, reached out his hand softly, opened the bag, and groped in it for his travelling writing-case, in which he knew that there was a small store of matches. When he had got one of the matches, he waited before he struck it on the coarse wooden table, and listened intently again, without knowing why. Still there was no sound in the room but the steady, ceaseless, rattling sound of the rain.

He lighted the candle again, without another moment of delay; and, on the instant of its burning up, the first object in the room that his eyes sought for was the curtained bed.

Just before the light had been put out, he had looked in that direction, and had seen no change, no disarrangement of any sort, in the folds of the closely-drawn curtains.

When he looked at the bed, now, he saw, hanging over the side of it, a long white hand.

It lay perfectly motionless, midway on the side of the bed, where the curtain at the head and the curtain at the foot met. Nothing more was visible. The clinging curtains hid everything but the long white hand.

He stood looking at it unable to stir, unable to call out; feeling nothing, knowing nothing, every faculty he possessed gathered up and lost in the one seeing faculty. How long that first panic held him he never could tell afterwards. It might have been only for a moment; it might have been for many minutes together. How he got to the bed—whether he ran to it headlong, or whether he approached it slowly—how he wrought himself up to unclose the curtains and look in, he never has remembered, and never will remember to his dying day. It is enough that he did go to the bed, and that he did look inside the curtains.

The man had moved. One of his arms was outside the clothes; his face was turned a little on the pillow; his eyelids were wide open. Changed as to position, and as to one of the features, the

face was, otherwise, fearfully and wonderfully unaltered. The dead paleness and the dead quiet were on it still.

One glance showed Arthur this—one glance, before he flew breathlessly to the door, and alarmed the house.

The man whom the landlord called 'Ben,' was the first to appear on the stairs. In three words, Arthur told him what had happened, and sent him for the nearest doctor.

I, who tell you this story, was then staying with a medical friend of mine, in practice at Doncaster, taking care of his patients for him, during his absence in London; and I, for the time being, was the nearest doctor. They had sent for me from the Inn, when the stranger was taken ill in the afternoon; but I was not at home, and medical assistance was sought for elsewhere. When the man from The Two Robins rang the night-bell, I was just thinking of going to bed. Naturally enough, I did not believe a word of his story about 'a dead man who had come to life again.' However, I put on my hat, armed myself with one or two bottles of restorative medicine, and ran to the Inn, expecting to find nothing more remarkable, when I got there, than a patient in a fit.

My surprise at finding that the man had spoken the literal truth was almost, if not quite, equalled by my astonishment at finding myself face to face with Arthur Holliday as soon as I entered the bedroom. It was no time then for giving or seeking explanations. We just shook hands amazedly; and then I ordered everybody but Arthur out of the room, and hurried to the man on the bed.

The kitchen fire had not been long out. There was plenty of hot water in the boiler, and plenty of flannel to be had. With these, with my medicines, and with such help as Arthur could render under my direction, I dragged the man, literally, out of the jaws of death. In less than an hour from the time when I had been called in, he was alive and talking in the bed on which he had been laid out to wait for the Coroner's inquest.

You will naturally ask me, what had been the matter with him; and I might treat you, in reply, to a long theory, plentifully sprinkled with, what the children call, hard words. I prefer telling you that, in this case, cause and effect could not be satisfactorily

joined together by any theory whatever. There are mysteries in life, and the condition of it, which human science has not fathomed yet; and I candidly confess to you, that, in bringing that man back to existence, I was, morally speaking, groping hap-hazard in the dark. I know (from the testimony of the doctor who attended him in the afternoon) that the vital machinery, so far as its action is appreciable by our senses, had, in this case, unquestionably stopped; and I am equally certain (seeing that I recovered him) that the vital principle was not extinct. When I add, that he had suffered from a long and complicated illness, and that his whole nervous system was utterly deranged, I have told you all I really know of the physical condition of my dead-alive patient at The Two Robins Inn.

When he 'came to,' as the phrase goes, he was a startling object to look at, with his colourless face, his sunken cheeks, his wild black eyes, and his long black hair. The first question he asked me about himself, when he could speak, made me suspect that I had been called in to a man in my own profession. I mentioned to him my surmise; and he told me that I was right.

He said he had come last from Paris, where he had been attached to a hospital. That he had lately returned to England, on his way to Edinburgh, to continue his studies; that he had been taken ill on the journey; and that he had stopped to rest and recover himself at Doncaster. He did not add a word about his name, or who he was; and, of course, I did not question him on the subject. All I inquired, when he ceased speaking, was what branch of the profession he intended to follow.

'Any branch,' he said bitterly, 'which will put bread into the mouth of a poor man.'

At this, Arthur, who had been hitherto watching him in silent curiosity, burst out impetuously in his usual good-humoured way:—

'My dear fellow!' (everybody was 'my dear fellow' with Arthur) 'now you have come to life again, don't begin by being downhearted about your prospects. I 'll answer for it, I can help you to some capital thing in the medical line—or, if I can't, I know my father can.'

The medical student looked at him steadily.

'Thank you,' he said, coldly. Then added, 'May I ask who your father is?'

'He 's well enough known all about this part of the country,' replied Arthur. 'He is a great manufacturer, and his name is Holliday.'

My hand was on the man's wrist during this brief conversation. The instant the name of Holliday was pronounced I felt the pulse under my fingers flutter, stop, go on suddenly with a bound, and beat afterwards, for a minute or two, at the fever rate.

'How did you come here?' asked the stranger, quickly, excitably, passionately almost.

Arthur related briefly what had happened from the time of his first taking the bed at the inn.

'I am indebted to Mr. Holliday's son then for the help that has saved my life,' said the medical student, speaking to himself, with a singular sarcasm in his voice. 'Come here!'

He held out, as he spoke, his long, white, bony, right hand.

'With all my heart,' said Arthur, taking the hand cordially. 'I may confess it now,' he continued, laughing. 'Upon my honour, you almost frightened me out of my wits.'

The stranger did not seem to listen. His wild black eyes were fixed with a look of eager interest on Arthur's face, and his long bony fingers kept tight hold of Arthur's hand. Young Holliday, on his side, returned the gaze, amazed and puzzled by the medical student's odd language and manners. The two faces were close together; I looked at them; and, to my amazement, I was suddenly impressed by the sense of a likeness between them—not in features, or complexion, but solely in expression. It must have been a strong likeness, or I should certainly not have found it out, for I am naturally slow at detecting resemblances between faces.

'You have saved my life,' said the strange man, still looking hard in Arthur's face, still holding tightly by his hand. 'If you had been my own brother, you could not have done more for me than that.'

He laid a singularly strong emphasis on those three words 'my own brother,' and a change passed over his face as he pronounced

them,—a change that no language of mine is competent to describe.

'I hope I have not done being of service to you yet,' said Arthur. 'I 'll speak to my father, as soon as I get home.'

'You seem to be fond and proud of your father,' said the medical student. 'I suppose, in return, he is fond and proud of you?'

'Of course, he is!' answered Arthur, laughing. 'Is there anything wonderful in that? Isn't *your* father fond—'

The stranger suddenly dropped young Holliday's hand, and turned his face away.

'I beg your pardon,' said Arthur. 'I hope I have not unintentionally pained you. I hope you have not lost your father.'

'I can't well lose what I have never had,' retorted the medical student, with a harsh, mocking laugh.

'What you have never had!'

The strange man suddenly caught Arthur's hand again, suddenly looked once more hard in his face.

'Yes,' he said, with a repetition of the bitter laugh. 'You have brought a poor devil back into the world, who has no business there. Do I astonish you? Well! I have a fancy of my own for telling you what men in my situation generally keep a secret. I have no name and no father. The merciful law of Society tells me I am Nobody's Son! Ask your father if he will be my father too, and help me on in life with the family name.'

Arthur looked at me, more puzzled than ever. I signed to him to say nothing, and then laid my fingers again on the man's wrist. No! In spite of the extraordinary speech that he had just made, he was not, as I had been disposed to suspect, beginning to get light-headed. His pulse, by this time, had fallen back to a quiet, slow beat, and his skin was moist and cool. Not a symptom of fever or agitation about him.

Finding that neither of us answered him, he turned to me, and began talking of the extraordinary nature of his case, and asking my advice about the future course of medical treatment to which he ought to subject himself. I said the matter required careful thinking over, and suggested that I should submit certain prescriptions to him the next morning. He told me to write them at once,

as he would, most likely, be leaving Doncaster, in the morning, before I was up. It was quite useless to represent to him the folly and danger of such a proceeding as this. He heard me politely and patiently, but held to his resolution, without offering any reasons or any explanations, and repeated to me, that if I wished to give him a chance of seeing my prescription, I must write it at once. Hearing this, Arthur volunteered the loan of a travelling writing-case, which he said, he had with him; and, bringing it to the bed, shook the note-paper out of the pocket of the case forthwith in his usual careless way. With the paper, there fell out on the counterpane of the bed a small packet of sticking-plaster, and a little water-colour drawing of a landscape.

The medical student took up the drawing and looked at it. His eye fell on some initials neatly written, in cypher, in one corner. He started and trembled; his pale face grew whiter than ever; his wild black eyes turned on Arthur, and looked through and through him.

'A pretty drawing,' he said in a remarkably quiet tone of voice.

'Ah! and done by such a pretty girl,' said Arthur. 'Oh, such a pretty girl! I wish it was not a landscape—I wish it was a portrait of her!'

'You admire her very much?'

Arthur, half in jest, half in earnest, kissed his hand for answer.

'Love at first sight!' he said, putting the drawing away again. 'But the course of it doesn't run smooth. It's the old story. She's monopolised as usual. Trammelled by a rash engagement to some poor man who is never likely to get money enough to marry her. It was lucky I heard of it in time, or I should certainly have risked a declaration when she gave me that drawing. Here, doctor! Here is pen, ink, and paper all ready for you.'

'When she gave you that drawing? Gave it. Gave it.' He repeated the words slowly to himself, and suddenly closed his eyes. A momentary distortion passed across his face, and I saw one of his hands clutch up the bedclothes and squeeze them hard. I thought he was going to be ill again, and begged that there might be no more talking. He opened his eyes when I spoke, fixed them once more searchingly on Arthur, and said, slowly and distinctly, 'You like her, and she likes you. The poor man may die out of

your way. Who can tell that she may not give you herself as well as her drawing, after all?'

Before young Holliday could answer, he turned to me, and said in a whisper, 'Now for the prescription.' From that time, though he spoke to Arthur again, he never looked at him more.

When I had written the prescription, he examined it, approved of it, and then astonished us both by abruptly wishing us good night. I offered to sit up with him, and he shook his head. Arthur offered to sit up with him, and he said, shortly, with his face turned away, 'No.' I insisted on having somebody left to watch him. He gave way when he found I was determined, and said he would accept the services of the waiter at the Inn.

'Thank you, both,' he said, as we rose to go. 'I have one last favour to ask—not of you, doctor, for I leave you to exercise your professional discretion—but of Mr. Holliday.' His eyes, while he spoke, still rested steadily on me, and never once turned towards Arthur. 'I beg that Mr. Holliday will not mention to any one—least of all to his father—the events that have occurred, and the words that have passed, in this room. I entreat him to bury me in his memory, as, but for him, I might have been buried in my grave. I cannot give my reasons for making this strange request. I can only implore him to grant it.'

His voice faltered for the first time, and he hid his face on the pillow. Arthur, completely bewildered, gave the required pledge. I took young Holliday away with me, immediately afterwards, to the house of my friend; determining to go back to the Inn, and to see the medical student again before he had left in the morning.

I returned to the Inn at eight o'clock, purposely abstaining from waking Arthur, who was sleeping off the past night's excitement on one of my friend's sofas. A suspicion had occurred to me as soon as I was alone in my bedroom, which made me resolve that Holliday and the stranger whose life he had saved should not meet again, if I could prevent it. I have already alluded to certain reports, or scandals, which I knew of, relating to the early life of Arthur's father. While I was thinking, in my bed, of what had passed at the Inn—of the change in the student's pulse when he heard the name of Holliday; of the resemblance of expression that I had discovered between his face and Arthur's; of the em-

phasis he had laid on those three words, 'my own brother'; and of his incomprehensible acknowledgement of his own illegitimacy—while I was thinking of these things, the reports I have mentioned suddenly flew into my mind, and linked themselves fast to the chain of my previous reflections. Something within me whispered, 'It is best that those two young men should not meet again.' I felt it before I slept; I felt it when I woke; and I went, as I told you, alone to the Inn the next morning.

I had missed my only opportunity of seeing my nameless patient again. He had been gone nearly an hour when I inquired for him.

I have now told you everything that I know for certain, in relation to the man whom I brought back to life in the double-bedded room of the Inn at Doncaster. What I have next to add is matter for inference and surmise, and is not, strictly speaking, matter of fact.

I have to tell you, first, that the medical student turned out to be strangely and unaccountably right in assuming it as more than probable that Arthur Holliday would marry the young lady who had given him the water-colour drawing of the landscape. That marriage took place a little more than a year after the events occurred which I have just been relating. The young couple came to live in the neighbourhood in which I was then established in practice. I was present at the wedding, and was rather surprised to find that Arthur was singularly reserved with me, both before and after his marriage, on the subject of the young lady's prior engagement. He only referred to it once, when we were alone, merely telling me, on that occasion, that his wife had done all that honour and duty required of her in the matter, and that the engagement had been broken off with the full approval of her parents. I never heard more from him than this. For three years he and his wife lived together happily. At the expiration of that time, the symptoms of a serious illness first declared themselves in Mrs. Arthur Holliday. It turned out to be a long, lingering, hopeless malady. I attended her throughout. We had been great friends when she was well, and we became more attached to each other than ever when she was ill. I had

many long and interesting conversations with her in the intervals when she suffered least. The result of one of these conversations I may briefly relate, leaving you to draw any inference from it that you please.

The interview to which I refer, occurred shortly before her death. I called one evening, as usual, and found her alone, with a look in her eyes which told me that she had been crying. She only informed me at first, that she had been depressed in spirits; but, by little and little, she became more communicative, and confessed to me that she had been looking over some old letters, which had been addressed to her, before she had seen Arthur, by a man to whom she had been engaged to be married. I asked her how the engagement came to be broken off. She replied that it had not been broken off, but that it had died out in a very mysterious way. The person to whom she was engaged—her first love, she called him—was very poor, and there was no immediate prospect of their being married. He followed my profession, and went abroad to study. They had corresponded regularly, until the time when, as she believed, he had returned to England. From that period she heard no more of him. He was of a fretful, sensitive temperament; and she feared that she might have inadvertently done or said something that offended him. However that might be, he had never written to her again; and, after waiting a year. she had married Arthur. I asked when the first estrangement had begun, and found that the time at which she ceased to hear anything of her first lover exactly corresponded with the time at which I had been called in to my mysterious patient at The Two Robins Inn.

A fortnight after that conversation, she died. In course of time, Arthur married again. Of late years, he has lived principally in London, and I have seen little or nothing of him.

I have many years to pass over before I can approach to anything like a conclusion of this fragmentary narrative. And even when that later period is reached, the little that I have to say will not occupy your attention for more than a few minutes. Between six and seven years ago, the gentleman to whom I introduced you in this room, came to me, with good professional recommendations, to fill the position of my assistant. We met, not like

strangers, but like friends—the only difference between us being, that I was very much surprised to see him, and that he did not appear to be at all surprised to see me. If he was my son or my brother, I believe he could not be fonder of me than he is; but he has never volunteered any confidences since he has been here, on the subject of his past life. I saw something that was familiar to me in his face when we first met; and yet it was also something that suggested the idea of change. I had a notion once that my patient at the Inn might be a natural son of Mr. Holliday's; I had another idea that he might also have been the man who was engaged to Arthur's first wife; and I have a third idea, still clinging to me, that Mr. Lorn is the only man in England who could really enlighten me, if he chose, on both those doubtful points. His hair is not black, now, and his eyes are dimmer than the piercing eyes that I remember, but, for all that, he is very like the nameless medical student of my young days—very like him. And, sometimes, when I come home late at night, and find him asleep, and wake him, he looks, in coming to, wonderfully like the stranger at Doncaster, as he raised himself in the bed on that memorable night!

The Doctor paused. Mr. Goodchild, who had been following every word that fell from his lips up to this time, leaned forward eagerly to ask a question. Before he could say a word, the latch of the door was raised, without any warning sound of footsteps in the passage outside. A long, white, bony hand appeared through the opening, gently pushing the door, which was prevented from working freely on its hinges by a fold in the carpet under it.

'That hand! Look at that hand, Doctor!' said Mr. Goodchild, touching him.

At the same moment, the Doctor looked at Mr. Goodchild, and whispered to him, significantly:

'Hush! he has come back.'

CHAPTER III

The Cumberland Doctor's mention of Doncaster Races, inspired Mr. Francis Goodchild with the idea of going down to Doncaster to see the races. Doncaster being a good way off, and quite out of the way of the Idle Apprentices (if anything could be out of their way, who had no way), it necessarily followed that Francis perceived Doncaster in the race-week to be, of all possible idlenesses, the particular idleness that would completely satisfy him.

Thomas, with an enforced idleness grafted on the natural and voluntary power of his disposition, was not of this mind; objecting that a man compelled to lie on his back on the floor, a sofa, a table, a line of chairs, or anything he could get to lie upon, was not in racing condition, and that he desired nothing better than to lie where he was, enjoying himself in looking at the flies on the ceiling. But, Francis Goodchild, who had been walking round his companion in a circuit of twelve miles for two days, and had begun to doubt whether it was reserved for him ever to be idle in his life, not only overpowered this objection, but even converted Thomas Idle to a scheme he formed (another idle inspiration), of conveying the said Thomas to the sea-coast, and putting his injured leg under a stream of salt-water.

Plunging into this happy conception headforemost, Mr. Goodchild immediately referred to the county-map, and ardently discovered that the most delicious piece of sea-coast to be found within the limits of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands, all summed up together, was Allonby on the coast of Cumberland. There was the coast of Scotland opposite to Allonby, said Mr. Goodchild with enthusiasm; there was a fine Scottish mountain on that Scottish coast; there were Scottish lights to be seen shining across the glorious Channel, and at Allonby itself there was every idle luxury (no doubt) that a watering-place could offer to the heart of idle man. Moreover, said Mr. Goodchild, with his finger on the map, this exquisite retreat was approached by a coach-road, from a railway-station called Aspatria—a name, in a manner, suggestive of the departed glories of Greece, associated with one of the most en-

gaging and most famous of Greek women. On this point, Mr. Goodchild continued at intervals to breathe a vein of classic fancy and eloquence exceedingly irksome to Mr. Idle, until it appeared that the honest English pronunciation of that Cumberland country shortened Aspatria into 'Spatter.' After this supplementary discovery, Mr. Goodchild said no more about it.

By way of Spatter, the crippled Idle was carried, hoisted, pushed, poked, and packed, into and out of carriages, into and out of beds, into and out of tavern resting-places, until he was brought at length within sniff of the sea. And now, behold the apprentices gallantly riding into Allonby in a one-horse fly, bent upon staying in that peaceful marine valley until the turbulent Doncaster time shall come round upon the wheel, in its turn among what are in sporting registers called the 'Fixtures' for the month.

'Do you see Allonby!' asked Thomas Idle.

'I don't see it yet,' said Francis, looking out of window.

'It must be there,' said Thomas Idle.

'I don't see it,' returned Francis.

'It must be there,' repeated Thomas Idle, fretfully.

'Lord bless me!' exclaimed Francis, drawing in his head, 'I suppose this is it!'

'A watering-place,' retorted Thomas Idle, with the pardonable sharpness of an invalid, 'can't be five gentlemen in straw hats, on a form on one side of a door, and four ladies in hats and falls, on a form on another side of a door, and three geese in a dirty little brook before them, and a boy's legs hanging over a bridge (with a boy's body I suppose on the other side of the parapet), and a donkey running away. What are you talking about?'

'Allonby, gentlemen,' said the most comfortable of landladies, as she opened one door of the carriage; 'Allonby, gentlemen,' said the most attentive of landlords, as he opened the other.

Thomas Idle yielded his arm to the ready Goodchild, and descended from the vehicle. Thomas, now just able to grope his way along, in a doubled-up condition, with the aid of two thick sticks, was no bad embodiment of Commodore Trunnion, or of one of those many gallant Admirals of the stage, who have all ample fortunes, gout, thick sticks, tempers, wards, and nephews. With this distinguished naval appearance upon him, Thomas made a

crab-like progress up a clean little bulk-headed staircase, into a clean little bulk-headed room, where he slowly deposited himself on a sofa, with a stick on either hand of him, looking exceedingly grim.

'Francis,' said Thomas Idle, 'what do you think of this place?'

'I think,' returned Mr. Goodchild, in a glowing way, 'it is everything we expected.'

'Hah!' said Thomas Idle.

'There is the sea,' cried Mr. Goodchild, pointing out of window; 'and here,' pointing to the lunch on the table, 'are shrimps. Let us—' here Mr. Goodchild looked out of window, as if in search of something, and looked in again,—'let us eat 'em.'

The shrimps eaten and the dinner ordered, Mr. Goodchild went out to survey the watering-place. As Chorus of the Drama, without whom Thomas could make nothing of the scenery, he by and by returned, to have the following report screwed out of him.

In brief, it was the most delightful place ever seen.

'But,' Thomas Idle asked, 'where is it?'

'It 's what you may call generally up and down the beach, here and there,' said Mr. Goodchild, with a twist of his hand.

'Proceed,' said Thomas Idle.

It was, Mr. Goodchild went on to say, in cross-examination, what you might call a primitive place. Large? No, it was not large. Who ever expected it would be large? Shape? What a question to ask! No shape. What sort of a street? Why, no street. Shops? Yes, of course (quite indignant). How many? Who ever went into a place to count the shops? Ever so many. Six? Perhaps. A library? Why, of course (indignant again). Good collection of books? Most likely—couldn't say—had seen nothing in it but a pair of scales. Any reading-room? Of course, there was a reading-room. Where? Where! why, over there. Where was over there? Why, *there!* Let Mr. Idle carry his eyes to that bit of waste ground above high-water mark, where the rank grass and loose stones were most in a litter; and he would see a sort of a long, ruinous brick loft, next door to a ruinous brick out-house, which loft had a ladder outside, to get up by. That was the reading-room, and if Mr. Idle didn't like the idea of a weaver's shuttle throbbing under a reading-room, that was

his look out. *He* was not to dictate, Mr. Goodchild supposed (indignant again), to the company.

'By the by,' Thomas Idle observed; 'the company?'

Well! (Mr. Goodchild went on to report) very nice company. Where were they? Why, there they were. Mr. Idle could see the tops of their hats, he supposed. What? Those nine straw hats again, five gentlemen's and four ladies'? Yes, to be sure. Mr. Goodchild hoped the company were not to be expected to wear helmets, to please Mr. Idle.

Beginning to recover his temper at about this point, Mr. Goodchild voluntarily reported that if you wanted to be primitive, you could be primitive here, and that if you wanted to be idle, you could be idle here. In the course of some days, he added, that there were three fishing-boats, but no rigging, and that there were plenty of fishermen who never fished. That they got their living entirely by looking at the ocean. What nourishment they looked out of it to support their strength, he couldn't say; but, he supposed it was some sort of Iodine. The place was full of their children, who were always upside down on the public buildings (two small bridges over the brook), and always hurting themselves or one another, so that their wailings made more continual noise in the air than could have been got in a busy place. The houses people lodged in, were nowhere in particular, and were in capital accordance with the beach; being all more or less cracked and damaged as its shells were, and all empty—as its shells were. Among them, was an edifice of destitute appearance, with a number of wall-eyed windows in it, looking desperately out to Scotland as if for help, which said it was a Bazaar (and it ought to know), and where you might buy anything you wanted—supposing what you wanted, was a little camp-stool or a child's wheelbarrow. The brook crawled or stopped between the houses and the sea, and the donkey was always running away, and when he got into the brook he was pelted out with stones, which never hit him, and which always hit some of the children who were upside down on the public buildings, and made their lamentations louder. This donkey was the public excitement of Allonby, and was probably supported at the public expense.

The foregoing descriptions, delivered in separate items, on

separate days of adventurous discovery, Mr. Goodchild severally wound up, by looking out of window, looking in again, and saying, 'But there is the sea, and here are the shrimps—let us eat 'em.'

There were fine sunsets at Allonby when the low flat beach, with its pools of water and its dry patches, changed into long bars of silver and gold in various states of burnishing, and there were fine views—on fine days—of the Scottish coast. But, when it rained at Allonby, Allonby thrown back upon its ragged self, became a kind of place which the donkey seemed to have found out, and to have his highly sagacious reasons for wishing to bolt from. Thomas Idle observed, too, that Mr. Goodchild, with a noble show of disinterestedness, became every day more ready to walk to Maryport and back, for letters; and suspicions began to harbour in the mind of Thomas, that his friend deceived him, and that Maryport was a preferable place.

Therefore, Thomas said to Francis on a day when they had looked at the sea and eaten the shrimps, 'My mind misgives me, Goodchild, that you go to Maryport, like the boy in the story-book, to ask *it* to be idle with you.'

'Judge, then,' returned Francis, adopting the style of the story-book, 'with what success. I go to a region which is a bit of water-side Bristol, with a slice of Wapping, a seasoning of Wolverhampton, and a garnish of Portsmouth, and I say, "Will *you* come and be idle with me?" And it answers, "No; for I am a great deal too vaporous, and a great deal too rusty, and a great deal too muddy; and a great deal too dirty altogether; and I have ships to load, and pitch and tar to boil, and iron to hammer, and steam to get up, and smoke to make, and stone to quarry, and fifty other disagreeable things to do, and I can't be idle with you." Then I go into jagged up-hill and down-hill streets, where I am in the pastry-cook's shop at one moment, and next moment in savage fastnesses of moor and morass, beyond the confines of civilisation, and I say to those murky and black-dusty streets, "Will *you* come and be idle with me?" To which they reply, "No, we can't, indeed, for we haven't the spirits, and we are startled by the echo of your feet on the sharp pavement, and we have so many goods in our shop-windows which nobody wants, and we have so much to do for a limited public which never comes to us

to be done for, that we are altogether out of sorts and can't enjoy ourselves with any one." So I go to the Post-office, and knock at the shutter, and I say to the Post-master, "Will *you* come and be idle with me?" To which he rejoins, "No, I really can't, for I live, as you may see, in such a very little Post-office, and pass my life behind such a very little shutter, that my hand, when I put it out, is as the hand of a giant crammed through the window of a dwarf's house at a fair, and I am a mere Post-office anchorite in a cell much too small for him, and I can't get out, and I can't get in, and I have no space to be idle in, even if I would." So, the boy,' said Mr. Goodchild, concluding the tale, 'comes back with the letters after all, and lives happy never afterwards.'

But it may, not unreasonably, be asked—while Francis Goodchild was wandering hither and thither, storing his mind with perpetual observation of men and things, and sincerely believing himself to be the laziest creature in existence all the time—how did Thomas Idle, crippled and confined to the house, contrive to get through the hours of the day?

Prone on the sofa, Thomas made no attempt to get through the hours, but passively allowed the hours to get through *him*. Where other men in his situation would have read books and improved their minds, Thomas slept and rested his body. Where other men would have pondered anxiously over their future prospects, Thomas dreamed lazily of his past life. The one solitary thing he did, which most other people would have done in his place, was to resolve on making certain alterations and improvements in his mode of existence, as soon as the effects of the misfortune that had overtaken him had all passed away. Remembering that the current of his life had hitherto oozed along in one smooth stream of laziness, occasionally troubled on the surface by a slight passing ripple of industry, his present ideas on the subject of self-reform, inclined him—not as the reader may be disposed to imagine, to project schemes for a new existence of enterprise and exertion—but, on the contrary, to resolve that he would never, if he could possibly help it, be active or industrious again, throughout the whole of his future career.

It is due to Mr. Idle to relate that his mind sauntered towards this peculiar conclusion on distinct and logically-producible

grounds. After reviewing, quite at his ease, and with many needful intervals of repose, the generally-placid spectacle of his past existence, he arrived at the discovery that all the great disasters which had tried his patience and equanimity in early life, had been caused by his having allowed himself to be deluded into imitating some pernicious example of activity and industry that had been set him by others. The trials to which he here alludes were three in number, and may be thus reckoned up: First, the disaster of being an unpopular and a thrashed boy at school; secondly, the disaster of falling seriously ill; thirdly, the disaster of becoming acquainted with a great bore.

The first disaster occurred after Thomas had been an idle and a popular boy at school, for some happy years. One Christmas-time, he was stimulated by the evil example of a companion, whom he had always trusted and liked, to be untrue to himself, and to try for a prize at the ensuing half-yearly examination. He did try, and he got a prize—how, he did not distinctly know at the moment, and cannot remember now. No sooner, however, had the book—Moral Hints to the Young on the Value of Time—been placed in his hands, than the first troubles of his life began. The idle boys deserted him, as a traitor to their cause. The industrious boys avoided him, as a dangerous interloper; one of their number, who had always won the prize on previous occasions, expressing just resentment at the invasion of his privileges by calling Thomas into the play-ground, and then and there administering to him the first sound and genuine thrashing that he had ever received in his life. Unpopular from that moment, as a beaten boy, who belonged to no side and was rejected by all parties, young Idle soon lost caste with his masters, as he had previously lost caste with his schoolfellows. He had forfeited the comfortable reputation of being the one lazy member of the youthful community whom it was quite hopeless to punish. Never again did he hear the headmaster say reproachfully to an industrious boy who had committed a fault, 'I might have expected this in Thomas Idle, but it is inexcusable, sir, in you, who know better.' Never more, after winning that fatal prize, did he escape the retributive imposition, or the avenging birch. From that time, the masters made him work, and the boys would not let him play.

From that time his social position steadily declined, and his life at school became a perpetual burden to him.

So, again, with the second disaster. While Thomas was lazy, he was a model of health. His first attempt at active exertion and his first suffering from severe illness are connected together by the intimate relations of cause and effect. Shortly after leaving school, he accompanied a party of friends to a cricket-field, in his natural and appropriate character of spectator only. On the ground it was discovered that the players fell short of the required number, and facile Thomas was persuaded to assist in making up the complement. At a certain appointed time, he was roused from peaceful slumber in a dry ditch, and placed before three wickets with a bat in his hand. Opposite to him, behind three more wickets, stood one of his bosom friends, filling the situation (as he was informed) of bowler. No words can describe Mr. Idle's horror and amazement, when he saw this young man—on ordinary occasions, the meekest and mildest of human beings—suddenly contract his eyebrows, compress his lips, assume the aspect of an infuriated savage, run back a few steps, then run forward, and, without the slightest previous provocation, hurl a detestably hard ball with all his might straight at Thomas's legs. Stimulated to preternatural activity of body and sharpness of eye by the instinct of self-preservation, Mr. Idle contrived, by jumping deftly aside at the right moment, and by using his bat (ridiculously narrow as it was for the purpose) as a shield, to preserve his life and limbs from the dastardly attack that had been made on both, to leave the full force of the deadly missile to strike his wicket instead of his leg; and to end the innings, so far as his side was concerned, by being immediately bowled out. Grateful for his escape, he was about to return to the dry ditch, when he was peremptorily stopped, and told that the other side was 'going in,' and that he was expected to 'field.' His conception of the whole art and mystery of 'fielding,' may be summed up in the three words of serious advice which he privately administered to himself on that trying occasion—avoid the ball. Fortified by this sound and salutary principle, he took his own course, impervious alike to ridicule and abuse. Whenever the ball came near him, he thought of his shins, and got out of the way immediately. 'Catch it!' 'Stop

it!' 'Pitch it up!' were cries that passed by him like the idle wind that he regarded not. He ducked under it, he jumped over it, he whisked himself away from it on either side. Never once, through the whole innings did he and the ball come together on anything approaching to intimate terms. The unnatural activity of body which was necessarily called forth for the accomplishment of this result threw Thomas Idle, for the first time in his life, into a perspiration. The perspiration, in consequence of his want of practice in the management of that particular result of bodily activity, was suddenly checked; the inevitable chill succeeeded; and that, in its turn, was followed by a fever. For the first time since his birth, Mr. Idle found himself confined to his bed for many weeks together, wasted and worn by a long illness, of which his own disastrous muscular exertion had been the sole first cause.

The third occasion on which Thomas found reason to reproach himself bitterly for the mistake of having attempted to be industrious, was connected with his choice of a calling in life. Having no interest in the Church, he appropriately selected the next best profession for a lazy man in England—the Bar. Although the Benchers of the Inns of Court have lately abandoned their good old principles, and oblige their students to make some show of studying, in Mr. Idle's time no such innovation as this existed. Young men who aspired to the honourable title of barrister were, very properly, not asked to learn anything of the law, but were merely required to eat a certain number of dinners at the table of their Hall, and to pay a certain sum of money; and were called to the Bar as soon as they could prove that they had sufficiently complied with these extremely sensible regulations. Never did Thomas move more harmoniously in concert with his elders and betters than when he was qualifying himself for admission among the barristers of his native country. Never did he feel more deeply what real laziness was in all the serene majesty of its nature, than on the memorable day when he was called to the Bar, after having carefully abstained from opening his law-books during his period of probation, except to fall asleep over them. How he could ever again have become industrious, even for the shortest period, after that great reward conferred upon his idleness, quite passes his comprehension. The kind Benchers

did everything they could to show him the folly of exerting himself. They wrote out his probationary exercise for him, and never expected him even to take the trouble of reading it through when it was written. They invited him, with seven other choice spirits as lazy as himself, to come and be called to the Bar, while they were sitting over their wine and fruit after dinner. They put his oaths of allegiance, and his dreadful official denunciations of the Pope and the Pretender, so gently into his mouth, that he hardly knew how the words got there. They wheeled all their chairs softly round from the table, and sat surveying the young barristers with their backs to their bottles, rather than stand up, or adjourn to hear the exercises read. And when Mr. Idle and the seven unlabouring neophytes, ranged in order, as a class, with their backs considerately placed against a screen, had begun, in rotation, to read the exercises which they had not written, even then, each Bencher, true to the great lazy principle of the whole proceeding, stopped each neophyte before he had stammered through his first line, and bowed to him, and told him politely that he was a barrister from that moment. This was all the ceremony. It was followed by a social supper, and by the presentation, in accordance with ancient custom, of a pound of sweetmeats and a bottle of Madeira, offered in the way of needful refreshment, by each grateful neophyte to each beneficent Bencher. It may seem inconceivable that Thomas should ever have forgotten the great do-nothing principle instilled by such a ceremony as this; but it is, nevertheless, true, that certain designing students of industrious habits found him out, took advantage of his easy humour, persuaded him that it was discreditable to be a barrister and to know nothing whatever about the law, and lured him, by the force of their own evil example, into a conveyancer's chambers, to make up for lost time, and to qualify himself for practice at the Bar. After a fortnight of self-delusion, the curtain fell from his eyes; he resumed his natural character, and shut up his books. But the retribution which had hitherto always followed his little casual errors of industry followed them still. He could get away from the conveyancer's chambers, but he could not get away from one of the pupils, who had taken a fancy to him,—a tall, serious, raw-boned, hard-working, disputatious pupil, with ideas of his

own about reforming the Law of Real Property, who has been the scourge of Mr. Idle's existence ever since the fatal day when he fell into the mistake of attempting to study the law. Before that time his friends were all sociable idlers like himself. Since that time the burden of bearing with a hard-working young man has become part of his lot in life. Go where he will now, he can never feel certain that the raw-boned pupil is not affectionately waiting for him round a corner, to tell him a little more about the Law of Real Property. Suffer as he may under the infliction, he can never complain, for he must always remember, with unavailing regret, that he has his own thoughtless industry to thank for first exposing him to the great social calamity of knowing a bore.

These events of his past life, with the significant results that they brought about, pass drowsily through Thomas Idle's memory, while he lies alone on the sofa at Allonby and elsewhere, dreaming away the time which his fellow-apprentice gets through so actively out of doors. Remembering the lesson of laziness which his past disasters teach, and bearing in mind also the fact that he is crippled in one leg because he exerted himself to go up a mountain, when he ought to have known that his proper course of conduct was to stop at the bottom of it, he holds now, and will for the future firmly continue to hold, by his new resolution never to be industrious again, on any pretence whatever, for the rest of his life. The physical results of his accident have been related in a previous chapter. The moral results now stand on record; and, with the enumeration of these, that part of the present narrative which is occupied by the Episode of The Sprained Ankle may now perhaps be considered, in all its aspects, as finished and complete.

'How do you propose that we get through this present afternoon and evening?' demanded Thomas Idle, after two or three hours of the foregoing reflections at Allonby.

Mr. Goodchild faltered, looked out of window, looked in again, and said, as he had so often said before, 'There is the sea, and here are the shrimps;—let us eat 'em!'

But, the wise donkey was at that moment in the act of bolting: not with the irresolution of his previous efforts which had been

wanting in sustained force of character, but with real vigour of purpose: shaking the dust off his mane and hind-feet at Allonby, and tearing away from it, as if he had nobly made up his mind that he never would be taken alive. At sight of this inspiring spectacle, which was visible from his sofa, Thomas Idle stretched his neck and dwelt upon it rapturously.

'Francis Goodchild,' he then said, turning to his companion with a solemn air, 'this is a delightful little Inn, excellently kept by the most comfortable of landladies and the most attentive of landlords, but—the donkey's right!'

The words, 'There is the sea, and here are the—' again trembled on the lips of Goodchild, unaccompanied however by any sound.

'Let us instantly pack the portmanteaus,' said Thomas Idle, 'pay the bill, and order a fly out, with instructions to the driver to follow the donkey!'

Mr. Goodchild, who had only wanted encouragement to disclose the real state of his feelings, and who had been pining beneath his weary secret, now burst into tears, and confessed that he thought another day in the place would be the death of him.

So, the two idle apprentices followed the donkey until the night was far advanced. Whether he was recaptured by the town-council, or is bolting at this hour through the United Kingdom, they know not. They hope he may be still bolting; if so, their best wishes are with him.

It entered Mr. Idle's head, on the borders of Cumberland, that there could be no idler place to stay at, except by snatches of a few minutes each, than a railway station. 'An intermediate station on a line—a junction—anything of that sort,' Thomas suggester. Mr. Goodchild approved of the idea as eccentric, and they journeyed on and on, until they came to such a station where there was an Inn.

'Here,' said Thomas, 'we may be luxuriously lazy; other people will travel for us, as it were, and we shall laugh at their folly.'

It was a Junction-Station, where the wooden razors before mentioned shaved the air very often, and where the sharp electric-telegraph bell was in a very restless condition. All manner of cross-lines of rails came zig-zagging into it, like a Congress of iron vipers; and, a little way out of it, a pointsman in an elevated

signal-box was constantly going through the motions of drawing immense quantities of beer at a public-house bar. In one direction, confused perspectives of embankments and arches were to be seen from the platform; in the other, the rails soon disentangled themselves into two tracks, and shot away under a bridge, and curved round a corner. Sidings were there, in which empty luggage-vans and cattle-boxes often butted against each other as if they couldn't agree; and warehouses were there, in which great quantities of goods seemed to have taken the veil (of the consistency of tarpaulin), and to have retired from the world without any hope of getting back to it. Refreshment-rooms were there; one, for the hungry and thirsty Iron Locomotives where their coke and water were ready, and of good quality, for they were dangerous to play tricks with; the other, for the hungry and thirsty human Locomotives, who might take what they could get, and whose chief consolation was provided in the form of three terrific urns or vases of white metal, containing nothing, each forming a breastwork for a defiant and apparently much-injured woman.

Established at this Station, Mr. Thomas Idle and Mr. Francis Goodchild resolved to enjoy it. But, its contrasts were very violent, and there was also an infection in it.

First, as to its contrasts. They were only two, but they were Lethargy and Madness. The Station was either totally unconscious, or wildly raving. By day, in its unconscious state, it looked as if no life could come to it,—as if it were all rust, dust, and ashes—as if the last train for ever, had gone without issuing any Return-Tickets—as if the last Engine had uttered its last shriek and burst. One awkward shave of the air from the wooden razor, and everything changed. Tight office-doors flew open, panels yielded, books, newspapers, travelling-caps and wrappers broke out of brick walls, money chinked, conveyances oppressed by nightmares of luggage came careering into the yard, porters started up from secret places, ditto the much-injured women, the shining bell, who lived in a little tray on stilts by himself, flew into a man's hand and clamoured violently. The pointsman aloft in the signal-box made the motions of drawing, with some difficulty, hogs-heads of beer. Down Train! More beer! Up Train! More

beer. Cross Junction Train! More beer! Cattle Train! More beer. Goods Train! Simmering, whistling, trembling, rumbling, thundering. Trains on the whole confusion of intersecting rails, crossing one another, bumping one another, hissing one another, backing to go forward, tearing into distance to come close. People frantic. Exiles seeking restoration to their native carriages, and banished to remoter climes. More beer and more bell. Then, in a minute, the Station relapsed into stupor as the stoker of the Cattle Train, the last to depart, went gliding out of it, wiping the long nose of his oil-can with a dirty pocket-handkerchief.

By night, in its unconscious state, the Station was not so much as visible. Something in the air, like an enterprising chemist's established in business on one of the boughs of Jack's beanstalk, was all that could be discerned of it under the stars. In a moment it would break out, a constellation of gas. In another moment, twenty rival chemists, on twenty rival beanstalks, came into existence. Then, the Furies would be seen, waving their lurid torches up and down the confused perspectives of embankments and arches—would be heard, too, wailing and shrieking. Then, the Station would be full of palpitating trains, as in the day; with the heightening difference that they were not so clearly seen as in the day, whereas the Station walls, starting forward under the gas, like a hippopotamus's eyes, dazzled the human locomotives with the sauce-bottle, the cheap music, the bedstead, the distorted range of buildings where the patent safes are made, the gentlemen in the rain with the registered umbrella, the lady returning from the ball with the registered respirator, and all their other embellishments. And now, the human locomotives, creased as to their countenances and purblind as to their eyes, would swarm forth in a heap, addressing themselves to the mysterious urns and the much-injured women; while the iron locomotives, dripping fire and water, shed their steam about plentifully, making the dull oxen in their cages, with heads depressed, and foam hanging from their mouths as their red looks glanced fearfully at the surrounding terrors, seem as though they had been drinking at half-frozen waters and were hung with icicles. Through the same steam would be caught glimpses of their fellow-travellers, the sheep, getting their white kid faces together, away from the

bars, and stuffing the interstices with trembling wool. Also, down among the wheels, of the man with the sledge-hammer, ringing the axles of the fast night-train; against whom the oxen have a misgiving that he is the man with the pole-axe who is to come by and by, and so the nearest of them try to get back, and get a purchase for a thrust at him through the bars. Suddenly, the bell would ring, the steam would stop with one hiss and a yell, the chemists on the beanstalks would be busy, the avenging Furies would bestir themselves, the fast night-train would melt from eye and ear, the other trains going their ways more slowly would be heard faintly rattling in the distance like old-fashioned watches running down, the saucebottle and cheap music retired from view, even the bedstead went to bed, and there was no such visible thing as the Station to vex the cool wind in its blowing, or perhaps the autumn lightning, as it found out the iron rails.

The infection of the Station was this:—When it was in the raving state, the Apprentices found it impossible to be there, without labouring under the delusion that they were in a hurry. To Mr. Goodchild, whose ideas of idleness were so imperfect, this was no unpleasant hallucination, and accordingly that gentleman went through great exertions in yielding to it, and running up and down the platform, jostling everybody, under the impression that he had a highly important mission somewhere, and had not a moment to lose. But, to Thomas Idle, this contagion was so very unacceptable an incident of the situation, that he struck on the fourth day, and requested to be moved.

'This place fills me with a dreadful sensation,' said Thomas, 'of having something to do. Remove me, Francis.'

'Where would you like to go next?' was the question of the ever-engaging Goodchild.

'I have heard there is a good old Inn at Lancaster, established in a fine old house: an Inn where they give you Bride-cake every day after dinner,' said Thomas Idle. 'Let us eat Bride-cake without the trouble of being married, or of knowing anybody in that ridiculous dilemma.'

Mr. Goodchild, with a lover's sigh, assented. They departed from the Station in a violent hurry (for which, it is unnecessary

to observe, there was not the least occasion), and were delivered at the fine old house at Lancaster, on the same night.

It is Mr. Goodchild's opinion, that if a visitor on his arrival at Lancaster could be accommodated with a pole which would push the opposite side of the street some yards farther off, it would be better for all parties. Protesting against being required to live in a trench, and obliged to speculate all day upon what the people can possibly be doing within a mysterious opposite window, which is a shop-window to look at, but not a shop-window in respect of its offering nothing for sale and declining to give any account whatever of itself, Mr. Goodchild concedes Lancaster to be a pleasant place. A place dropped in the midst of a charming landscape, a place with a fine ancient fragment of castle, a place of lovely walks, a place possessing staid old houses richly fitted with old Honduras mahogany, which has grown so dark with time that it seems to have got something of a retrospective mirror-quality into itself, and to show the visitor, in the depth of its grain, through all its polish, the hue of the wretched slaves who groaned long ago under old Lancaster merchants. And Mr. Goodchild adds that the stones of Lancaster do sometimes whisper, even yet, of rich men passed away—upon whose great prosperity some of these old doorways frowned sullen in the brightest weather—that their slave-gain turned to curses, as the Arabian Wizard's money turned to leaves, and that no good ever came of it, even unto the third and fourth generations, until it was wasted and gone.

It was a gallant sight to behold, the Sunday procession of the Lancaster elders to Church—all in black, and looking fearfully like a funeral without the Body—under the escort of Three Beadles.

'Think,' said Francis, as he stood at the Inn window, admiring, 'of being taken to the sacred edifice by three Beadles! I have, in my early time, been taken out of it by one Beadle; but, to be taken into it by three, O Thomas, is a distinction I shall never enjoy!

CHAPTER IV

When Mr. Goodchild had looked out of the Lancaster Inn window for two hours on end, with great perseverance, he began to entertain a misgiving that he was growing industrious. He therefore set himself next, to explore the country from the tops of all the steep hills in the neighbourhood.

He came back at dinner-time, red and glowing, to tell Thomas Idle what he had seen. Thomas, on his back reading, listened with great composure, and asked him whether he really had gone up those hills, and bothered himself with those views, and walked all those miles?

'Because I want to know,' added Thomas, 'what you would say of it, if you were obliged to do it?'

'It would be different, then,' said Francis. 'It would be work, then; now, it 's play.'

'Play!' replied Thomas Idle, utterly repudiating the reply. 'Play! Here is a man goes systematically tearing himself to pieces, and putting himself through an incessant course of training, as if he were always under articles to fight a match for the champion's belt, and he calls it Play! Play!' exclaimed Thomas Idle, scornfully contemplating his one boot in the air. 'You *can't* play. You don't know what it is. You make work of everything.'

The bright Goodchild amiably smiled.

'So you do,' said Thomas. 'I mean it. To me you are an absolutely terrible fellow. You do nothing like another man. Where another fellow would fall into a footbath of action or emotion, you fall into a mine. Where any other fellow would be a painted butterfly, you are a fiery dragon. Where another man would stake a sixpence, you stake your existence. If you were to go up in a balloon, you would make for Heaven; and if you were to dive into the depths of the earth, nothing short of the other place would content you. What a fellow you are, Francis!'

The cheerful Goodchild laughed.

'It 's all very well to laugh, but I wonder you don't feel it to be serious,' said Idle. 'A man who can do nothing by halves appears to me to be a fearful man.'

'Tom, Tom,' returned Goodchild, 'if I can do nothing by halves, and be nothing by halves, it 's pretty clear that you must take me as a whole, and make the best of me.'

With this philosophical rejoinder, the airy Goodchild clapped Mr. Idle on the shoulder in a final manner, and they sat down to dinner.

'By and by,' said Goodchild, 'I have been over a lunatic asylum too, since I have been out.'

'He has been,' exclaimed Thomas Idle, casting up his eyes, 'over a lunatic asylum! Not content with being as great an Ass as Captain Barclay in the pedestrian way, he makes a Lunacy Commissioner of himself—for nothing!'

'An immense place,' said Goodchild, 'admirable offices, very good arrangements, very good attendants; altogether a remarkable place.'

'And what did you see there?' asked Mr. Idle, adapting Hamlet's advice to the occasion, and assuming the virtue of interest, though he had it not.

'The usual thing,' said Francis Goodchild, with a sigh. 'Long groves of blighted men-and-women-trees; interminable avenues of hopeless faces; numbers, without the slightest power of really combining for any earthly purpose; a society of human creatures who have nothing in common but that they have all lost the power of being humanly social with one another.'

'Take a glass of wine with me,' said Thomas Idle, 'and let *us* be social.'

'In one gallery, Tom,' pursued Francis Goodchild, 'which looked to me about the length of the Long Walk at Windsor, more or less—'

'Probably less,' observed Thomas Idle.

'In one gallery, which was otherwise clear of patients (for they were all out), there was a poor little dark-chinned, meagre man, with a perplexed brow and a pensive face, stooping low over the matting on the floor, and picking out with his thumb and forefinger the course of its fibres. The afternoon sun was slanting in at the large end-window, and there were cross patches of light and shade all down the vista, made by the unseen windows and the open doors of the little sleeping-cells on either side. In about

the centre of the perspective, under an arch, regardless of the pleasant weather, regardless of the solitude, regardless of approaching footsteps, was the poor little dark-chinned, meagre man, poring over the matter. "What are you doing there?" said my conductor, when we came to him. He looked up, and pointed to the matting. "I wouldn't do that, I think," said my conductor, kindly; "if I were you, I would go and read, or I would lie down if I felt tired; but I wouldn't do that." The patient considered a moment, and vacantly answered, "No, sir, I won't; I 'll—I 'll go and read," and so he lamely shuffled away into one of the little rooms. I turned my head before we had gone many paces. He had already come out again, and was again poring over the matting, and tracking out its fibres with his thumb and forefinger. I stopped to look at him, and it came into my mind, that probably the course of those fibres as they plaited in and out, over and under, was the only course of things in the whole wide world that it was left to him to understand—that his darkening intellect had narrowed down to the small cleft of light which showed him, "This piece was twisted this way, went in here, passed under, came out there, was carried on away here, to the right where I now put my finger on it, and in this progress of events, the thing was made and came to be here." Then, I wondered whether he looked into the matting, next, to see if it could show him anything of the process through which *he* came to be there, so strangely poring over it. Then, I thought how all of us, God help us! in our different ways are poring over our bits of matting, blindly enough, and what confusions and mysteries we make in the pattern. I had a sadder fellow-feeling with the little dark-chinned, meagre man, by that time, and I came away.'

Mr. Idle diverting the conversation to grouse, custards, and bride-cake, Mr. Goodchild followed in the same direction. The bride-cake was as bilious and indigestible as if a real Bride had cut it, and the dinner it completed was an admirable performance.

The house was a genuine old house of a very quaint description, teeming with old carvings, and beams, and panels, and having an excellent old staircase, with a gallery or upper staircase, cut off from it by a curious fence-work of old oak, or of the old

Honduras Mahogany wood. It was, and is, and will be, for many a long year to come, a remarkably picturesque house; and a certain grave mystery lurking in the depth of the old mahogany panels, as if they were so many deep pools of dark water—such, indeed, as they had been much among when they were trees—gave it a very mysterious character after nightfall.

When Mr. Goodchild and Mr. Idle had first alighted at the door, and stepped into the sombre, handsome old hall, they had been received by half a dozen noiseless old men in black, all dressed exactly alike, who glided up the stairs with the obliging landlord and waiter—but without appearing to get into their way, or to mind whether they did or no—and who had filed off to the right and left on the old staircase, as the guests entered their sitting-room. It was then broad, bright day. But, Mr. Goodchild had said, when their door was shut, 'Who on earth are those old men?' And afterwards, both on going out and coming in, he had noticed that there were no old men to be seen.

Neither, had the old men, or any one of the old men, reappeared since. The two friends had passed a night in the house, but had seen nothing more of the old men. Mr. Goodchild, in rambling about it, had looked along passages, and glanced in at doorways, but had encountered no old men; neither did it appear that any old men were, by any member of the establishment, missed or expected.

Another odd circumstance impressed itself on their attention. It was, that the door of their sitting-room was never left untouched for a quarter of an hour. It was opened with hesitation, opened with confidence, opened a little way, opened a good way, —always clapped-to again without a word of explanation. They were reading, they were writing, they were eating, they were drinking, they were talking, they were dozing; the door was always opened at an unexpected moment, and they looked towards it, and it was clapped-to again, and nobody was to be seen. When this had happened fifty times or so, Mr. Goodchild had said to his companion, jestingly: 'I begin to think, Tom, there was something wrong with those six old men.'

Night had come again, and they had been writing for two or three hours: writing, in short, a portion of the lazy notes from

which these lazy sheets are taken. They had left off writing, and glasses were on the table between them. The house was closed and quiet. Around the head of Thomas Idle, as he lay upon his sofa, hovered light wreaths of fragrant smoke. The temples of Francis Goodchild, as he leaned back in his chair, with his two hands clasped behind his head, and his legs crossed, were similarly decorated.

They had been discussing several idle subjects of speculation, not omitting the strange old men, and were still so occupied, when Mr. Goodchild abruptly changed his attitude to wind up his watch. They were just becoming drowsy enough to be stopped in their talk by any such slight check. Thomas Idle, who was speaking at the moment, paused and said, 'How goes it?'

'One,' said Goodchild.

As if he had ordered One old man, and the order were promptly executed (truly, all orders were so, in that excellent hotel) the door opened, and One old man stood there.

He did not come in, but stood with the door in his hand.

'One of the six, Tom, at last!' said Mr. Goodchild, in a surprised whisper.—'Sir, your pleasure?'

'Sir, *your* pleasure?' said the One old man.

'I didn't ring.'

'The bell did,' said the One old man.

He said BELL, in a deep, strong way, that would have expressed the church Bell.

'I had the pleasure, I believe, of seeing you yesterday?' said Goodchild.

'I cannot undertake to say for certain,' was the grim reply of One old man.

'I think you saw me? Did you not?'

'Saw *you?*' said the old man. 'O yes, I saw *you*. But, I see many who never see me.'

A chilled, slow, earthy, fixed old man. A cadaverous old man of measured speech. An old man who seemed as unable to wink, as if his eyelids had been nailed to his forehead. An old man whose eyes—two spots of fire—had no more motion than if they had been connected with the back of his skull by screws driven through it, and riveted and bolted outside, among his grey hair.

The night had turned so cold, to Mr. Goodchild's sensations, that he shivered. He remarked lightly, and half apologetically, 'I think somebody is walking over my grave.'

'No,' said the weird old man, 'there is no one there.'

Mr. Goodchild looked at Idle, but Idle lay with his head enwreathed in smoke.

'No one there?' said Goodchild.

'There is no one at your grave, I assure you,' said the old man.

He had come in and shut the door, and he now sat down. He did not bend himself to sit, as other people do, but seemed to sink bolt upright, as if in water, until the chair stopped him.

'My friend, Mr. Idle,' said Goodchild, extremely anxious to introduce a third person into the conversation.

'I am,' said the old man, without looking at him, 'at Mr. Idle's service.'

'If you are an old inhabitant of this place,' Francis Goodchild resumed:

'Yes.'

'Perhaps you can decide a point my friend and I were in doubt upon, this morning. They hang condemned criminals at the Castle, I believe?'

'*I* believe so,' said the old man.

'Are their faces turned towards that noble prospect?'

'Your face is turned,' replied the old man, 'to the Castle wall. When you are tied up, you see its stones expanding and contracting violently, and a similar expansion and contraction seem to take place in your own head and breast. Then, there is a rush of fire and an earthquake, and the Castle springs into the air, and you tumble down a precipice.'

His cravat appeared to trouble him. He put his hand to his throat, and moved his neck from side to side. He was an old man of a swollen character of face, and his nose was immoveably hitched up on one side, as if by a little hook inserted in that nostril. Mr. Goodchild felt exceedingly uncomfortable, and began to think the night was hot, and not cold.

'A strong description, sir,' he observed.

'A strong sensation,' the old man rejoined.

Again, Mr. Goodchild looked to Mr. Thomas Idle; but Thomas

lay on his back with his face attentively turned towards the One old man, and made no sign. At this time Mr. Goodchild believed that he saw threads of fire stretch from the old man's eyes to his own, and there attach themselves. (Mr. Goodchild writes the present account of his experience, and, with the utmost solemnity, protests that he had the strongest sensation upon him of being forced to look at the old man along those two fiery films, from that moment.)

'I must tell it to you,' said the old man, with a ghastly and a stony stare.

'What?' asked Francis Goodchild.

'You know where it took place. Yonder!'

Whether he pointed to the room above, or to the room below, or to any room in that old house, or to a room in some other old house in that old town, Mr. Goodchild was not, nor is, nor ever can be, sure. He was confused by the circumstance that the right forefinger of the One old man seemed to dip itself in one of the threads of fire, light itself, and make a fiery start in the air, as it pointed somewhere. Having pointed somewhere, it went out.

'You know she was a Bride,' said the old man.

'I know they still send up Bride-cake,' Mr. Goodchild faltered. 'This is a very oppressive air.'

'She was a Bride,' said the old man. 'She was a fair, flaxen-haired, large-eyed girl, who had no character, no purpose. A weak, credulous, incapable, helpless nothing. Not like her mother. No, no. It was her father whose character she reflected.

'Her mother had taken care to secure everything to herself, for her own life, when the father of this girl (a child at that time) died—of sheer helplessness; no other disorder—and then He renewed the acquaintance that had once subsisted between the mother and Him. He had been put aside for the flaxen-haired, large-eyed man (or nonentity) with Money. He could overlook that for Money. He wanted compensation in Money.

'So, he returned to the side of that woman the mother, made love to her again, danced attendance on her, and submitted himself to her whims. She wreaked upon him every whim she had, or could invent. He bore it. And the more he bore, the more he

wanted compensation in Money, and the more he was resolved to have it.

'But, lo! Before he got it, she cheated him. In one of her imperious states, she froze, and never thawed again. She put her hands to her head one night, uttered a cry, stiffened, lay in that attitude certain hours, and died. And he had got no compensation for her in Money, yet. Blight and Murrain on her! Not a penny.

'He had hated her throughout that second pursuit, and had longed for retaliation on her. He now counterfeited her signature to an instrument, leaving all she had to leave, to her daughter—ten years old then—to whom the property passed absolutely, and appointing himself the daughter's Guardian. When He slid it under the pillow of the bed on which she lay, He bent down in the deaf ear of Death, and whispered: "Mistress Pride, I have determined a long time that, dead or alive, you must make me compensation in Money."

'So, now there were only two left. Which two were, He, and the fair flaxen-haired, large-eyed foolish daughter, who afterwards became the Bride.

'He put her to school. In a secret, dark, oppressive, ancient house, he put her to school with a watchful and unscrupulous woman. "My worthy lady," he said, "here is a mind to be formed; will you help me to form it?" She accepted the trust. For which she, too, wanted compensation in Money, and had it.

'The girl was formed in the fear of him, and in the conviction, that there was no escape from him. She was taught, from the first, to regard him as her future husband—the man who must marry her—the destiny that overshadowed her—the appointed certainty that could never be evaded. The poor fool was soft white wax in their hands, and took the impression that they put upon her. It hardened with time. It became a part of herself. Inseparable from herself, and only to be torn away from her, by tearing life away from her.

'Eleven years she had lived in the dark house and its gloomy garden. He was jealous of the very light and air getting to her, and they kept her close. He stopped the wide chimneys, shaded the little windows, left the strong-stemmed ivy to wander where

it would over the house-front, the moss to accumulate on the untrimmed fruit-trees in the red-walled garden, the weeds to overrun its green and yellow walks. He surrounded her with images of sorrow and desolation. He caused her to be filled with fears of the place and of the stories that were told of it, and then on pretext of correcting them, to be left in it in solitude, or made to shrink about it in the dark. When her mind was most depressed and fullest of terrors, then, he would come out of one of the hiding-places from which he overlooked her, and present himself as her sole resource.

'Thus, by being from her childhood the one embodiment her life presented to her of power to coerce and power to relieve, power to bind and power to loose, the ascendency over her weakness was secured. She was twenty-one years and twenty-one days old, when he brought her home to the gloomy house, his half-witted, frightened, and submissive Bride of three weeks.

'He had dismissed the governess by that time—what he had left to do, he could best do alone—and they came back, upon a rainy night, to the scene of her long preparation. She turned to him upon the threshold, as the rain was dripping from the porch, and said:

'"O sir, it is the Death-watch ticking for me!"

'"Well!" he answered. "And if it were?"

'"O sir!" she returned to him, "look kindly on me, and be merciful to me! I beg your pardon. I will do anything you wish, if you will only forgive me!"

'That had become the poor fool's constant song: "I beg your pardon," and "Forgive me!"

'She was not worth hating; he felt nothing but contempt for her. But, she had long been in the way, and he had long been weary, and the work was near its end, and had to be worked out.

'"You fool," he said. "Go up the stairs!"

'She obeyed very quickly, murmuring, "I will do anything you wish!" When he came into the Bride's Chamber, having been a little retarded by the heavy fastenings of the great door (for they were alone in the house, and he had arranged that the people who attended on them should come and go in the day), he found her withdrawn to the furthest corner, and there standing pressed

against the paneling as if she would have shrunk through it: her flaxen hair all wild about her face, and her large eyes staring at him in vague terror.

'"What are you afraid of? Come and sit down by me."

'"I will do anything you wish. I beg your pardon, sir. Forgive me!" Her monotonous tune as usual.

'"Ellen, here is a writing that you must write out to-morrow, in your own hand. You may as well be seen by others, busily engaged upon it. When you have written it all fairly, and corrected all mistakes, call in any two people there may be about the house, and sign your name to it before them. Then, put it in your bosom to keep it safe, and when I sit here again to-morrow night, give it to me."

'"I will do it all, with the greatest care. I will do anything you wish."

'"Don't shake and tremble, then."

'"I will try my utmost not to do it—if you will only forgive me!"

'Next day, she sat down at her desk, and did as she had been told. He often passed in and out of the room, to observe her, and always saw her slowly and laboriously writing: repeating to herself the words she copied, in appearance quite mechanically, and without caring or endeavouring to comprehend them, so that she did her task. He saw her follow the directions she had received, in all particulars; and at night, when they were alone again in the same Bride's Chamber, and he drew his chair to the hearth, she timidly approached him from her distant seat, took the paper from her bosom, and gave it into his hand.

'It secured all her possessions to him, in the event of her death. He put her before him, face to face, that he might look at her steadily; and he asked her, in so many plain words, neither fewer nor more, did she know that?

'There were spots of ink upon the bosom of her white dress, and they made her face look whiter and her eyes look larger as she nodded her head. There were spots of ink upon the hand with which she stood before him, nervously plaiting and folding her white skirts.

'He took her by the arm, and looked her, yet more closely and steadily, in the face. "Now, die! I have done with you."

'She shrunk, and uttered a low, suppressed cry.

'"I am not going to kill you. I will not endanger my life for yours. Die!"

'He sat before her in the gloomy Bride's Chamber, day after day, night after night, looking the word at her when he did not utter it. As often as her large unmeaning eyes were raised from the hands in which she rocked her head, to the stern figure, sitting with crossed arms and knitted forehead, in the chair, they read in it, "Die!" When she dropped asleep in exhaustion, she was called back to shuddering consciousness, by the whisper, "Die!" When she fell upon her old entreaty to be pardoned, she was answered, "Die!" When she had out-watched and out-suffered the long night, and the rising sun flamed into the sombre room, she heard it hailed with, "Another day and not dead?—Die!"

'Shut up in the deserted mansion, aloof from all mankind, and engaged alone in such a struggle without any respite, it came to this—that either he must die, or she. He knew it very well, and concentrated his strength against her feebleness. Hours upon hours he held her by the arm when her arm was black where he held it, and bade her Die!

'It was done, upon a windy morning, before sunrise. He computed the time to be half-past four; but, his forgotten watch had run down, and he could not be sure. She had broken away from him in the night, with loud and sudden cries—the first of that kind to which she had given vent—and he had had to put his hands over her mouth. Since then, she had been quiet in the corner of the paneling where she had sunk down; and he had left her, and had gone back with his folded arms and his knitted forehead to his chair.

'Paler in the pale light, more colourless than ever in the leaden dawn, he saw her coming, trailing herself along the floor towards him—a white wreck of hair, and dress, and wild eyes, pushing itself on by an irresolute and bending hand.

'"O, forgive me! I will do anything. O, sir, pray tell me I may live!"

'"Die!"

'"Are you so resolved? Is there no hope for me?"

'"Die!"

'Her large eyes strained themselves with wonder and fear; wonder and fear changed to reproach; reproach to blank nothing. It was done. He was not at first so sure it was done, but that the morning sun was hanging jewels in her hair—he saw the diamond, emerald, and ruby, glittering among it in little points, as he stood looking down at her—when he lifted her and laid her on her bed.

'She was soon laid in the ground. And now they were all gone, and he had compensated himself well.

'He had a mind to travel. Not that he meant to waste his Money, for he was a pinching man and liked his Money dearly (liked nothing else, indeed), but, that he had grown tired of the desolate house and wished to turn his back upon it and have done with it. But, the house was worth Money, and Money must not be thrown away. He determined to sell it before he went. That it might look the less wretched and bring a better price, he hired some labourers to work in the overgrown garden; to cut out the dead wood, trim the ivy that dropped in heavy masses over the windows and gables, and clear the walks in which the weeds were growing mid-leg high.

'He worked, himself, along with them. He worked later than they did, and, one evening at dusk, was left working alone, with his bill-hook in his hand. One autumn evening, when the Bride was five weeks dead.

'"It grows too dark to work longer," he said to himself, "I must give over for the night."

'He destested the house, and was loath to enter it. He looked at the dark porch waiting for him like a tomb, and felt that it was an accursed house. Near to the porch, and near to where he stood, was a tree whose branches waved before the old bay-window of the Bride's Chamber, where it had been done. The tree swung suddenly, and made him start. It swung again, although the night was still. Looking up into it, he saw a figure among the branches.

'It was the figure of a young man. The face looked down, as his looked up; the branches cracked and swayed; the figure rap-

idly descended, and slid upon its feet before him. A slender youth of about her age, with long light brown hair.

'"What thief are you?" he said, seizing the youth by the collar.

'The young man, in shaking himself free, swung him a blow with his arm across the face and throat. They closed, but the young man got from him and stepped back, crying, with great eagerness and horror, "Don't touch me! I would as lieve be touched by the Devil!"

'He stood still, with his bill-hook in his hand, looking at the young man. For, the young man's look was the counterpart of her last look, and he had not expected ever to see that again.

'"I am no thief. Even if I were, I would not have a coin of your wealth, if it would buy me the Indies. You murderer!'

'"What!"

'"I climbed it," said the young man, pointing up into the tree, "for the first time, nigh four years ago. I climbed it, to look at her. I saw her. I spoke to her. I have climbed it, many a time, to watch and listen for her. I was a boy, hidden among its leaves, when from that bay-window she gave me this!"

'He showed a tress of flaxen hair, tied with a mourning ribbon.

'"Her life," said the young man, "was a life of mourning. She gave me this, as a token of it, and a sign that she was dead to every one but you. If I had been older, if I had seen her sooner, I might have saved her from you. But, she was fast in the web when I first climbed the tree, and what could I do then to break it!"

'In saying those words, he burst into a fit of sobbing and crying: weakly at first, then passionately.

'"Murderer! I climbed the tree on the night when you brought her back. I heard her, from the tree, speak of the Death-watch at the door. I was three times in the tree while you were shut up with her, slowly killing her. I saw her, from the tree, lie dead upon her bed. I have watched you, from the tree, for proofs and traces of your guilt. The manner of it, is a mystery to me yet, but I will pursue you until you have rendered up your life to the hangman. You shall never, until then, be rid of me. I loved

her! I can know no relenting towards you. Murderer, I loved her!"

'The youth was bare-headed, his hat having fluttered away in his descent from the tree. He moved towards the gate. He had to pass—Him—to get to it. There was breadth for two old-fashioned carriages abreast; and the youth's abhorrence, openly expressed in every feature of his face and limb of his body, and very hard to bear, had verge enough to keep itself at a distance in. He (by which I mean the other) had not stirred hand or foot, since he had stood still to look at the boy. He faced round, now, to follow him with his eyes. As the back of the bare light-brown head was turned to him, he saw a red curve stretch from his hand to it. He knew, before he threw the bill-hook, where it had alighted—I say, had alighted, and not, would alight; for, to his clear perception the thing was done before he did it. It cleft the head, and it remained there, and the boy lay on his face.

'He buried the body in the night, at the foot of the tree. As soon as it was light in the morning, he worked at turning up all the ground near the tree, and hacking and hewing at the neighbouring bushes and undergrowth. When the labourers came, there was nothing suspicious, and nothing suspected.

'But, he had, in a moment, defeated all his precautions, and destroyed the triumph of the scheme he had so long concerted, and so successfully worked out. He had got rid of the Bride, and had acquired her fortune without endangering his life; but now, for a death by which he had gained nothing, he had evermore to live with a rope around his neck.

'Beyond this, he was chained to the house of gloom and horror, which he could not endure. Being afraid to sell it or to quit it, lest discovery should be made, he was forced to live in it. He hired two old people, man and wife, for his servants; and dwelt in it, and dreaded it. His great difficulty, for a long time, was the garden. Whether he should keep it trim, whether he should suffer it to fall into its former state of neglect, what would be the least likely way of attracting attention to it?

'He took the middle course of gardening, himself, in his evening leisure, and of then calling the old serving man to help him; but, of never letting him work there alone. And he made himself an

arbour over against the tree, where he could sit and see that it was safe.

'As the seasons changed, and the tree changed, his mind perceived dangers that were always changing. In the leafy time, he perceived that the upper boughs were growing into the form of the young man—that they made the shape of him exactly, sitting in a forked branch swinging in the wind. In the time of the falling leaves, he perceived that they came down from the tree, forming tell-tale letters on the patch, or that they had a tendency to heap themselves into a churchyard mound above the grave. In the winter, when the tree was bare, he perceived that the boughs swung at him the ghost of the blow the young man had given, and that they threatened him openly. In the spring when the sap was mounting in the trunk, he asked himself, were the dried-up particles of blood mounting with it: to make out more obviously this year than last, the leaf-screened figure of the young man, swinging in the wind?

'However, he turned his Money over and over, and still over. He was in the dark trade, the gold-dust trade, and most secret trades that yielded great returns. In ten years, he had turned his Money over, so many times, that the traders and shippers who had dealings with him, absolutely did not lie—for once—when they declared that he had increased his fortune, Twelve Hundred Per Cent.

'He possessed his riches one hundred years ago, when people could be lost easily. He had heard who the youth was, from hearing of the search that was made after him; but, it died away, and the youth was forgotten.

'The annual round of changes in the tree had been repeated ten times since the night of the burial at its foot, when there was a great thunder-storm over this place. It broke at midnight, and raged until morning. The first intelligence he heard from his old serving-man that morning was, that the tree had been struck by Lightning.

'It had been riven down the stem, in a very surprising manner, and the stem lay in two blighted shafts: one resting against the house, and one against a portion of the old red garden-wall in which its fall had made a gap. The fissure went down the tree to

a little above the earth, and there stopped. There was great curiosity to see the tree, and, with most of his former fears revived, he sat in his arbour—grown quite an old man—watching the people who came to see it.

'They quickly began to come, in such dangerous numbers, that he closed his garden-gate and refused to admit any more. But, there were certain men of science who travelled from a distance to examine the tree, and, in an evil hour, he let them in—Blight and Murrain on them, let them in!

'They wanted to dig up the ruin by the roots, and closely examine it, and the earth about it. Never, while he lived! They offered money for it. They! Men of science, whom he could have bought by the gross, with a scratch of his pen! He showed them the garden-gate again, and locked and barred it.

'But they were bent on doing what they wanted to do, and they bribed the old serving-man—a thankless wretch who regularly complained when he received his wages, of being underpaid—and they stole into the garden by night with their lanterns, picks, and shovels, and fell to at the tree. He was lying in a turret-room on the other side of the house (the Bride's Chamber had been unoccupied ever since), but he soon dreamed of picks and shovels, and got up.

'He came to an upper window on that side, whence he could see their lanterns, and them, and the loose earth in a heap which he had himself disturbed and put back, when it was last turned to the air. It was found! They had that minute lighted on it. They were all bending over it. One of them said, "The skull is fractured"; and another, "See here the bones"; and another, "See here the clothes"; and then the first struck in again, and said, "A rusty bill-hook!"

'He became sensible, next day, that he was already put under a strict watch, and that he could go nowhere without being followed. Before a week was out, he was taken and laid in hold. The circumstances were gradually pieced together against him, with a desperate malignity, and an appalling ingenuity. But, see the justice of men, and how it was extended to him! He was further accused of having poisoned that girl in the Bride's Chamber. He,

who had carefully and expressly avoided imperilling a hair of her head for her, and who had seen her die of her own incapacty!

'There was doubt for which of the two murders he should be first tried; but, the real one was chosen, and he was found Guilty, and cast for Death. Blood-thirsty wretches! They would have made him Guilty of anything, so set they were upon having his life.

'His money could do nothing to save him, and he was hanged. *I* am He, and I was hanged at Lancaster Castle with my face to the wall, a hundred years ago!'

At this terrific announcement, Mr. Goodchild tried to rise and cry out. But, the two fiery lines extending from the old man's eyes to his own, kept him down, and he could not utter a sound. His sense of hearing, however, was acute, and he could hear the clock strike Two. No sooner had he heard the clock strike Two, than he saw before him Two old men!

Two.

The eyes of each, connected with his eyes by two films of fire: each, exactly like the other; each, addressing him at precisely one and the same instant: each, gnashing the same teeth in the same head, with the same twitched nostril above them, and the same suffused expression around it. Two old men. Differing in nothing, equally distinct to the sight, the copy no fainter than the original, the second as real as the first.

'At what time,' said the Two old men, 'did you arrive at the door below?'

'At Six.'

'And there were Six old men upon the stairs!'

Mr. Goodchild having wiped the perspiration from his brow, or tried to do it, the Two old men proceeded in one voice, and in the singular number:

'I had been anatomised, but had not yet had my skeleton put together and re-hung on an iron hook, when it began to be whispered that the Bride's Chamber was haunted. It *was* haunted, and I was there.

'*We* were there. She and I were there. I, in the chair upon the hearth; she, a white wreck again, trailing itself towards me on

the floor. But, I was the speaker no more, and the one word that she said to me from midnight until dawn was, "Live!"

'The youth was there, likewise. In the tree outside the window. Coming and going in the moonlight, as the tree bent and gave. He has, ever since, been there, peeping in at me in my torment; revealing to me by snatches, in the pale lights and slatey shadows where he comes and goes, bare-headed—a bill-hook, standing edgewise in his hair.

'In the Bride's Chamber, every night from midnight until dawn—one month in the year excepted, as I am going to tell you—he hides in the tree, and she comes towards me on the floor; always approaching; never coming nearer; always visible as if by moonlight, whether the moon shines or no; always saying, from midnight until dawn, her one word, "Live!"

'But, in the month wherein I was forced out of this life—this present month of thirty days—the Bride's Chamber is empty and quiet. Not so my old dungeon. Not so the rooms where I was restless and afraid, ten years. Both are fitfully haunted then. At One in the morning, I am what you saw me when the clock struck that hour—One old man. At Two in the morning, I am Two old men. At Three, I am Three. By Twelve at noon, I am Twelve old men, One for every hundred per cent. of old gain. Every one of the Twelve, with Twelve times my old power of suffering and agony. From that hour until Twelve at night, I, Twelve old men in anguish and fearful foreboding, wait for the coming of the executioner. At twelve at night, I, Twelve old men turned off, swing invisible outside Lancaster Castle, with Twelve faces to the wall!

'When the Bride's Chamber was first haunted, it was known to me that this punishment would never cease, until I could make its nature, and my story, known to two living men together. I waited for the coming of two living men together into the Bride's Chamber, years upon years. It was infused into my knowledge (of the means I am ignorant) that if two living men, with their eyes open, could be in the Bride's Chamber at One in the morning, they would see me sitting in my chair.

'At length, the whispers that the room was spiritually troubled, brought two men to try the adventure. I was scarcely struck upon

the hearth at midnight (I came there as if the Lightning blasted me into being), when I heard them ascending the stairs. Next, I saw them enter. One of them was a bold, gay, active man, in the prime of life, some five and forty years of age; the other, a dozen years younger. They brought provisions with them in a basket, and bottles. A young woman accompanied them, with wood and coals for the lighting of the fire. When she had lighted it, the bold, gay, active man accompanied her along the gallery outside the room, to see her safely down the staircase, and came back laughing.

'He locked the door, examined the chamber, put out the contents of the basket on the table before the fire—little recking of me, in my appointed station on the hearth, close to him—and filled the glasses, and ate and drank. His companion did the same, and was as cheerful and confident as he: though he was the leader. When they had supped, they laid pistols on the table, turned to the fire, and began to smoke their pipes of foreign make.

'They had travelled together, and had been much together, and had an abundance of subjects in common. In the midst of their talking and laughing, the younger man made a reference to the leader's being always ready for any adventure; that one, or any other. He replied in these words:

'"Not quite so, Dick; if I am afraid of nothing else, I am afraid of myself."

'His companion seeming to grow a little dull, asked him, in what sense? How?

'"Why, thus," he returned. "Here is a ghost to be disproved. Well! I cannot answer for what my fancy might do if I were alone here, or what tricks my senses might play with me if they had me to themselves. But, in company with another man, and especially with you, Dick, I would consent to outface all the Ghosts that were ever told of in the universe."

'"I had not the vanity to suppose that I was of so much importance to-night," said the other.

'"Of so much," rejoined the leader, more seriously than he had spoken yet, "that I would, for the reason I have given, on no account have undertaken to pass the night here alone."

'It was within a few minutes of One. The head of the younger

man had drooped when he made his last remark, and it drooped lower now.

'"Keep awake, Dick!" said the leader, gaily. "The small hours are the worst."

'He tried, but his head drooped again.

'"Dick!" urged the leader. "Keep awake!"

'"I can't," he indistinctly muttered. "I don't know what strange influence is stealing over me. I can't."

His companion looked at him with a sudden horror, and I, in my different way, felt a new horror also; for, it was on the stroke of One, and I felt that the second watcher was yielding to me, and that the curse was upon me that I must send him to sleep.

'"Get up and walk, Dick!" cried the leader. "Try!"

'It was in vain to go behind the slumberer's chair and shake him. One o'clock sounded, and I was present to the elder man, and he stood transfixed before me.

'To him alone, I was obliged to relate my story, without hope of benefit. To him alone, I was an awful phantom making a quite useless confession. I foresee it will ever be the same. The two living men together will never come to release me. When I appear, the senses of one of the two will be locked in sleep; he will neither see nor hear me; my communication will ever be made to a solitary listener, and will ever be unserviceable. Woe! Woe! Woe!'

As the Two old men, with these words, wrung their hands, it shot into Mr. Goodchild's mind that he was in the terrible situation of being virtually alone with the spectre, and that Mr. Idle's immoveability was explained by his having been charmed asleep at One o'clock. In the terror of this sudden discovery which produced an indescribable dread, he struggled so hard to get free from the four fiery threads, that he snapped them, after he had pulled them out to a great width. Being then out of bonds, he caught up Mr. Idle from the sofa and rushed downstairs with him.

'What are you about, Francis?' demanded Mr. Idle. 'My bedroom is not down here. What the deuce are you carrying me at all for? I can walk with a stick now. I don't want to be carried. Put me down.'

Mr. Goodchild put him down in the old hall, and looked about him wildly.

'What are you doing? Idiotically plunging at your own sex, and rescuing them or perishing in the attempt?' asked Mr. Idle, in a highly petulant state.

'The One old man!' cried Mr. Goodchild, distractedly,—'and the Two old men!'

Mr. Idle deigned no other reply than 'The One old woman, I think you mean,' as he began hobbling his way back up the staircase, with the assistance of its broad balustrade.

'I assure you, Tom,' began Mr. Goodchild, attending at his side, 'that since you fell asleep—'

'Come, I like that!' said Thomas Idle, 'I haven't closed an eye!'

With the peculiar sensitiveness on the subject of the disgraceful action of going to sleep out of bed, which is the lot of all mankind, Mr. Idle persisted in this declaration. The same peculiar sensitiveness impelled Mr. Goodchild, on being taxed with the same crime, to repudiate it with honourable resentment. The settlement of the question of The One old man and The Two old men was thus presently complicated, and soon made quite impracticable. Mr. Idle said it was all Bride-cake, and fragments, newly arranged, of things seen and thought about in the day. Mr. Goodchild said how could that be, when he hadn't been asleep, and what right could Mr. Idle have to say so, who had been asleep? Mr. Idle said he had never been asleep, and never did go to sleep, and that Mr. Goodchild, as a general rule, was always asleep. They consequently parted for the rest of the night, at their bedroom doors, a little ruffled. Mr. Goodchild's last words were, that he had had, in that real and tangible old sitting-room of that real and tangible old Inn (he supposed Mr. Idle denied its existence?), every sensation and experience, the present record of which is now within a line or two of completion; and that he would write it out and print it every word. Mr. Idle returned that he might if he liked—and he did like, and has now done it.

CHAPTER V

Two of the many passengers by a certain late Sunday evening train, Mr. Thomas Idle and Mr. Francis Goodchild, yielded up their tickets at a little rotten platform (converted into artificial touchwood by smoke and ashes), deep in the manufacturing bosom of Yorkshire. A mysterious bosom it appeared, upon a damp, dark, Sunday night, dashed through in the train to the music of the whirling wheels, the panting of the engine, and the part-singing of hundreds of third-class excursionists, whose vocal efforts 'bobbed arayound' from sacred to profane, from hymns, to our transatlantic sisters the Yankee Gal and Mairy Anne, in a remarkable way. There seemed to have been some large vocal gathing near to every lonely station on the line. No town was visible, no village was visible, no light was visible; but, a multitude got out singing, and a multitude got in singing, and the second multitude took up the hymns, and adopted our transatlantic sisters, and sang of their own egregious wickedness, and of their bobbing arayound, and of how the ship it was ready and the wind it was fair, and they were bayound for the sea, Mairy Anne, until they in their turn became a getting-out multitude, and were replaced by another getting-in multitude, who did the same. And at every station, the getting-in multitude, with an artistic reference to the completeness of their chorus, incessantly cried, as with one voice while scuffling into the carriages, 'We mun aa' gang toogither!'

The singing and the multitudes had trailed off as the lonely places were left and the great towns were neared, and the way had lain as silently as a train's way ever can, over the vague black streets of the great gulfs of towns, and among their branchless woods of vague black chimneys. These towns looked, in the cinderous wet, as though they had one and all been on fire and were just put out—a dreary and quenched panorama, many miles long.

Thus, Thomas and Francis got to Leeds; of which enterprising and important commercial centre it may be observed with delicacy, that you must either like it very much or not at all. Next day, the first of the Race-Week, they took train to Doncaster.

And instantly the character, both of travellers and of luggage, entirely changed, and no other business than race-business any longer existed on the face of the earth. The talk was all of horses and 'John Scott.' Guards whispered behind their hands to station-masters, of horses and John Scott. Men in cut-away coats and speckled cravats fastened with peculiar pins, and with the large bones of their legs developed under tight trousers, so that they should look as much as possible like horses' legs, paced up and down by twos at junction-stations, speaking low and moodily of horses and John Scott. The young clergyman in the black strait-waistcoat, who occupied the middle seat of the carriage, expounded in his peculiar pulpit-accent to the young and lovely Reverend Mrs. Crinoline, who occupied the opposite middle-seat, a few passages of rumour relative to 'Oartheth, my love, and Mithter John Eth-cott.' A bandy vagabond, with a head like a Dutch cheese, in a fustian stable-suit, attending on a horse-box and going about the platforms with a halter hanging round his neck like a Calais burgher of the ancient period much degenerated, was courted by the best society, by reason of what he had to hint, when not engaged in eating straw, concerning 't'harses and Joon Scott.' The engine-driver himself, as he applied one eye to his large stationary double-eye-glass on the engine, seemed to keep the other open, sideways, upon horses and John Scott.

Breaks and barriers at Doncaster Station to keep the crowd off; temporary wooden avenues of ingress and egress, to help the crowd on. Forty extra porters sent down for this present blessed Race-Week, and all of them making up their betting-books in the lamp-room or somewhere else, and none of them to come and touch the luggage. Travellers disgorged into an open space, a howling wilderness of idle men. All work but race-work at a stand-still; all men at a stand-still. 'Ey my word! Deant ask noon o' us to help wi' t'luggage. Bock your opinion loike a mon. Coom! Dang it, coom, t'harses and Joon Scott!' In the midst of the idle men, all the fly horses and omnibus horses of Doncaster and parts adjacent, rampant, rearing, backing, plunging, shying—apparently the result of their hearing of nothing but their own order and John Scott.

Grand Dramatic Company from London for the Race-Week.

Poses Plastiques in the Grand Assembly Room up the Stable-Yard at seven and nine each evening, for the Race-Week. Grand Alliance Circus in the field beyond the bridge, for the Race-Week. Grand Exhibition of Aztec Lilliputians, important to all who want to be horrified cheap, for the Race-Week. Lodgings, grand and not grand, but all at grand prices, ranging from ten pounds to twenty, for the Grand Race-Week!

Rendered giddy enough by these things, Messieurs Idle and Goodchild repaired to the quarters they had secured beforehand, and Mr. Goodchild looked down from the window into the surging street.

'By Heaven, Tom!' cried he, after contemplating it, 'I am in the Lunatic Asylum again, and these are all mad people under the charge of a body of designing keepers!'

All through the Race-Week, Mr. Goodchild never divested himself of this idea. Every day he looked out of window, with something of the dread of Lemuel Gulliver looking down at men after he returned home from the horse-country; and every day he saw the Lunatics, horse-mad, betting-mad, drunken-mad, vice-mad, and the designing Keepers always after them. The idea pervaded, like the second colour in shot-silk, the whole of Mr. Goodchild's impressions. They were much as follows:

Monday, mid-day. Races not to begin until tomorrow, but all the mob-Lunatics out, crowding the pavements of the one main street of pretty and pleasant Doncaster, crowding the road, particularly crowding the outside of the Betting Rooms, whooping and shouting loudly after all passing vehicles. Frightened lunatic horses occasionally running away, with infinite clatter. All degrees of men, from peers to paupers, betting incessantly. Keepers very watchful, and taking all good chances. An awful family likeness among the Keepers, to Mr. Palmer and Mr. Thurtell. With some knowledge of expression and some acquaintance with heads (thus writes Mr. Goodchild), I never have seen anywhere, so many repetitions of one class of countenance and one character of head (both evil) as in this street at this time. Cunning, covetousness, secrecy, cold calculation, hard callousness and dire insensibility, are the uniform Keeper characteristics. Mr. Palmer passes me five times in five minutes, and, as I go down the

street, the back of Mr. Thurtell's skull is always going on before me.

Monday evening. Town lighted up; more Lunatics out than ever; a complete choke and stoppage of the thoroughfare outside the Betting Rooms. Keepers, having dined, pervade the Betting Rooms, and sharply snap at the moneyed Lunatics. Some Keepers flushed with drink, and some not, but all close and calculating. A vague echoing roar of 't' harses' and 't' races' always rising in the air, until midnight, at about which period it dies away in occasional drunken songs and straggling yells. But, all night, some unmannerly drinking-house in the neighbourhood opens its mouth at intervals and spits out a man too drunk to be retained: who thereupon makes what uproarious protest may be left in him, and either falls asleep where he tumbles, or is carried off in custody.

Tuesday morning, at daybreak. A sudden rising, as it were out of the earth, of all the obscene creatures, who sell 'correct cards of the races.' They may have been coiled in corners, or sleeping on door-steps, and, having all passed the night under the same set of circumstances, may all want to circulate their blood at the same time; but, however that may be, they spring into existence all at once and together, as though a new Cadmus had sown a race-horse's teeth. There is nobody up, to buy the cards; but, the cards are madly cried. There is no patronage to quarrel for; but, they madly quarrel and fight. Conspicuous among these hyænas, as breakfast-time discloses, is a fearful creature in the general semblance of a man: shaken off his next-to-no legs by drink and devilry, bare-headed and bare-footed, with a great shock of hair like a horrible broom, and nothing on him but a ragged pair of trousers and a pink glazed-calico coat—made on him—so very tight that it is as evident that he could never take it off, as that he never does. This hideous apparition, inconceivably drunk, has a terrible power of making a gong-like imitation of the braying of an ass: which feat requires that he should lay his right jaw in his begrimed right paw, double himself up, and shake his bray out of himself, with much staggering on his next-to-no legs, and much twirling of his horrible broom, as if it were a mop. From the present minute, when he comes in sight holding up his cards to the windows, and hoarsely proposing purchase to My

Lord, Your Excellency, Colonel, the Noble Captain, and Your Honourable Worship—from the present minute until the Grand Race-Week is finished, at all hours of the morning, evening, day, and night, shall the town reverberate, at capricious intervals, to the brays of this frightful animal the Gong-donkey.

No very great racing today, so no very great amount of vehicles: though there is a good sprinkling, too: from farmers' carts and gigs, to carriages with post-horses and to fours-in-hand, mostly coming by the road from York, and passing on straight through the main street to the Course. A walk in the wrong direction may be a better thing for Mr. Goodchild to-day than the Course, so he walks in the wrong direction. Everybody gone to the Races. Only children in the street. Grand Alliance Circus deserted; not one Star-Rider left; omnibus which forms the Pay-Place, having on separate panels Pay here for the Boxes, Pay here for the Pit, Pay here for the Gallery, hove down in a corner and locked up; nobody near the tent but the man on his knees on the grass, who is making the paper balloons for the Star young gentleman to jump through to-night. A pleasant road, pleasantly wooded. No labourers working in the fields; all gone 't' races.' The few late wenders of their way 't' races,' who are yet left driving on the road, stare in amazement at the recluse who is not going 't' races.' Roadside innkeeper has gone 't' races.' Turnpike man has gone 't' races.' His thrifty wife, washing clothes at the toll-house door, is going 't' races' to-morrow. Perhaps there may be no one left to take the toll to-morrow; who knows? Though assuredly that would be neither turnpike-like nor Yorkshire-like. The very wind and dust seem to be hurrying 't' races,' as they briskly pass the only wayfarer on the road. In the distance, the Railway Engine, waiting at the town-end, shrieks despairingly. Nothing but the difficulty of getting off the Line, restrains that Engine from going 't' races,' too, it is very clear.

At night, more Lunatics out than last night—and more Keepers. The latter very active at the Betting Rooms, the street in front of which is now impassable. Mr. Palmer as before. Mr. Thurtell as before. Roar and uproar as before. Gradual subsidence as before. Unmannerly drinking-house expectorates as

before. Drunken negro-melodists, Gong-donkey, and correct cards, in the night.

On Wednesday morning, the morning of the great St. Leger, it becomes apparent that there has been a great influx since yesterday, both of Lunatics and Keepers. The families of the tradesmen over the way are no longer within human ken; their places know them no more; ten, fifteen, and twenty guinea-lodgers fill them. At the pastry-cook's second-floor window, a Keeper is brushing Mr. Thurtell's hair—thinking it his own. In the wax-chandler's attic, another Keeper is putting on Mr. Palmer's braces. In the gunsmith's nursery, a Lunatic is shaving himself. In the serious stationer's best sitting-room, three Lunatics are taking a combination breakfast, praising the (cook's) devil, and drinking neat brandy in an atmosphere of last midnight's cigars. No family sanctuary is free from our Angelic messengers—we put up at the Angel—who in the guise of extra waiters for the grand Race-Week, rattle in and out of the most secret chambers of everybody's house, with dishes and tin covers, decanters, soda water bottles, and glasses. An hour later. Down the street and up the street, as far as eyes can see and a good deal farther, there is a dense crowd; outside the Betting Rooms it is like a great struggle at a theatre door—in the days of theatres; or at the vestibule of the Spurgeon temple—in the days of Spurgeon. An hour later. Fusing into this crowd, and somehow getting through it, are all kinds of conveyances, and all kinds of foot-passengers; carts, with brick-makers and brick-makeresses jolting up and down on planks; drags with the needful grooms behind, sitting cross-armed in the needful manner, and slanting themselves backward from the soles of their boots at the needful angle; postboys, in the shining hats and smart jackets of the olden time, when stokers were not; beautiful Yorkshire horses, gallantly driven by their own breeders and masters. Under every pole, and every shaft, and every horse, and every wheel as it would seem, the Gong-donkey —metallically braying, when not struggling for life, or whipped out of the way.

By one o'clock, all this stir has gone out of the streets, and there is no one left in them but Francis Goodchild. Francis Good-

child will not be left in them long; for, he too is on his way 't' races.'

A most beautiful sight, Francis Goodchild finds 't' races' to be, when he has left fair Doncaster behind him, and comes out on the free course, with its agreeable prospect, its quaint Red House oddly changing and turning as Francis turns, its green grass, and fresh heath. A free course and an easy one, where Francis can roll smoothly where he will, and can choose between the start, or the coming-in, or the turn behind the brow of the hill, or any out-of-the-way point where he lists to see the throbbing horses straining every nerve, and making the sympathetic earth throb as they come by. Francis much delights to be, not in the Grand Stand, but where he can see it, rising against the sky with its vast tiers of little white dots of faces, and its last high rows and corners of people, looking like pins stuck into an enormous pincushion—not quite so symmetrically as his orderly eye could wish, when people change or go away. When the race is nearly run out, it is as good as the race to him to see the flutter among the pins, and the change in them from dark to light, as hats are taken off and waved. Not less full of interest, the loud anticipation of the winner's name, the swelling, and the final, roar; then, the quick dropping of all the pins out of their places, the revelation of the shape of the bare pincushion, and the closing-in of the whole host of Lunatics and Keepers, in the rear of the three horses with bright-coloured riders, who have not yet quite subdued their gallop though the contest is over.

Mr. Goodchild would appear to have been by no means free from lunacy himself at 't' races,' though not of the prevalent kind. He is suspected by Mr. Idle to have fallen into a dreadful state concerning a pair of little lilac gloves and a little bonnet that he saw there. Mr. Idle asserts, that he did afterwards repeat at the Angel, with an appearance of being lunatically seized, some rhapsody to the following effect: 'O little lilac gloves! And O winning little bonnet, making in conjunction with her golden hair quite a Glory in the sunlight round the pretty head, why anything in the world but you and me! Why may not this day's running—of horses, to all the rest: of precious sands of life to me—be prolonged through an everlasting autumn-sunshine, without a sunset!

Slave of the Lamp, or Ring, strike me yonder gallant equestrian Clerk of the Course, in the scarlet coat, motionless on the green grass for ages! Friendly Devil on Two Sticks, for ten times ten thousand years, keep Blink-Bonny jibbing at the post, and let us have no start! Arab drums, powerful of old to summon Genii in the desert, sound of yourselves and raise a troop for me in the desert of my heart, which shall so enchant this dusty barouche (with a conspicuous excise-plate, resembling the Collector's door-plate at a turnpike), that I, within it, loving the little lilac gloves, the winning little bonnet, and the dear unknown-wearer with the golden hair, may wait by her side for ever, to see a Great St. Leger that shall never be run!'

Thursday morning. After a tremendous night of crowding, shouting, drinking-house expectoration, Gong-donkey, and correct cards. Symptoms of yesterday's gains in the way of drink, and of yesterday's losses in the way of money, abundant. Money-losses very great. As usual, nobody seems to have won; but, large losses and many losers are unquestionable facts. Both Lunatics and Keepers, in general very low. Several of both kinds look in at the chemist's while Mr. Goodchild is making a purchase there, to be 'picked up.' One red-eyed Lunatic, flushed, faded, and disordered, enters hurriedly and cries savagely, 'Hond us a gloss of sal volatile in wather, or soom domned thing o' thot sart!' Faces at the Betting Rooms very long, and a tendency to bite nails observable. Keepers likewise given this morning to standing about solitary, with their hands in their pockets, looking down at their boots as they fit them into cracks of the pavement, and then looking up whistling and walking away. Grand Alliance Circus out, in procession; buxom lady-member of Grand Alliance, in crimson riding-habit, fresher to look at, even in her paint under the day sky, than the cheeks of Lunatics or Keepers. Spanish Cavalier appears to have lost yesterday, and jingles his bossed bridle with disgust, as if he were paying. Reaction also apparent at the Guildhall opposite, whence certain pickpockets come out handcuffed together, with that peculiar walk which is never seen under any other circumstances—a walk expressive of going to jail, game, but still of jails being in bad taste and arbitrary, and how would *you* like it if it was you instead of me, as it ought to

be! Mid-day. Town filled as yesterday, but not so full; and emptied as yesterday, but not so empty. In the evening, Angel ordinary where every Lunatic and Keeper has his modest daily meal of turtle, venison, and wine, not so crowded as yesterday, and not so noisy. At night, the theatre. More abstracted faces in it than one ever sees at public assemblies; such faces wearing an expression which strongly reminds Mr. Goodchild of the boys at school who were 'going up next,' with their arithmetic or mathematics. These boys are, no doubt, going up to-morrow with *their* sums and figures. Mr. Palmer and Mr. Thurtell in the boxes O. P. Mr. Thurtell and Mr. Palmer in the boxes P. S. The firm of Thurtell, Palmer, and Thurtell, in the boxes Centre. A most odious tendency observable in these distinguished gentlemen to put vile constructions on sufficiently innocent phrases in the play, and then to applaud them in a Satyr-like manner. Behind Mr. Goodchild, with a party of other Lunatics and one Keeper, the express incarnation of the thing called a 'gent.' A gentleman born; a gent manufactured. A something with a scarf round its neck, and a slipshod speech issuing from behind the scarf; more depraved, more foolish, more ignorant, more unable to believe in any noble or good thing of any kind, than the stupidest Bosjesman. The thing is but a boy in years, and is addled with drink. To do its company justice, even its company is ashamed of it, as it drawls its slang criticisms on the representation, and inflames Mr. Goodchild with a burning ardour to fling it into the pit. Its remarks are so horrible, that Mr. Goodchild, for the moment, even doubts whether that *is* a wholesome Art, which sets women apart on a high floor before such a thing as this, though as good as its own sisters, or its own mother—whom Heaven forgive for bringing it into the world! But, the consideration that a low nature must make a low world of its own to live in, whatever the real materials, or it could no more exist than any of us could without the sense of touch, brings Mr. Goodchild to reason: the rather, because the thing soon drops its downy chin upon its scarf, and slobbers itself asleep.

Friday Morning. Early fights. Gong-donkey, and correct cards. Again, a great set towards the races, though not so great a set as on Wednesday. Much packing going on too, upstairs at

the gunsmith's, wax-chandler's, and the serious stationer's; for there will be a heavy drift of Lunatics and Keepers to London by the afternoon train. The course as pretty as ever; the great pincushion as like a pincushion, but not nearly so full of pins; whole rows of pins wanting. On the great event of the day, both Lunatics and Keepers become inspired with rage; and there is a violent scuffling, and a rushing at the losing jockey, and an emergence of the said jockey from a swaying and menacing crowd, protected by friends, and looking the worse for wear; which is a rough proceeding, though animating to see from a pleasant distance. After the great event, rills begin to flow from the pincushion towards the railroad; the rills swell into rivers; the rivers soon unite into a lake. The lake floats Mr. Goodchild into Doncaster, past the Itinerant personage in black, by the way-side telling him from the vantage ground of a legibly printed placard on a pole that for all these things the Lord will bring him to judgment. No turtle and venison ordinary this evening; that is all over. No Betting at the rooms; nothing there but the plants in pots, which have, all the week, been stood about the entry to give it an innocent appearance, and which have sorely sickened by this time.

Saturday. Mr. Idle wishes to know at breakfast, what were those dreadful groanings in his bedroom doorway in the night? Mr. Goodchild answers, Nightmare. Mr. Idle repels the calumny, and calls the waiter. The Angel is very sorry—had intended to explain, but you see, gentlemen, there was a gentleman dined downstairs with two more, and he had lost a deal of money, and he would drink a deal of wine, and in the night he 'took the horrors,' and got up; and as his friends could do nothing with him he laid himself down and groaned at Mr. Idle's door. 'And he DID groan there,' Mr. Idle says; 'and you will please to imagine me inside, "taking the horrors" too!'

So far, the picture of Doncaster on the occasion of its great sporting anniversary, offers probably a general representation of the social condition of the town, in the past as well as in the present time. The sole local phenomenon of the current year, which may be considered as entirely unprecedented in its way, and

which certainly claims, on that account, some slight share of notice, consists in the actual existence of one remarkable individual, who is sojourning in Doncaster, and who, neither directly nor indirectly, has anything at all to do, in any capacity whatever, with the racing amusements of the week. Ranging throughout the entire crowd that fills the town, and including the inhabitants as well as the visitors, nobody is to be found altogether disconnected with the business of the day, excepting this one unparalleled man. He does not bet on the races, like the sporting men. He does not assist the races, like the jockeys, starters, judges, and grooms. He does not look on at the races, like Mr. Goodchild and his fellow-spectators. He does not profit by the races, like the hotel-keepers and the tradespeople. He does not minister to the necessities of the races, like the boothkeepers, the postilions, the waiters and the hawkers of Lists. He does not assist the attractions of the races, like the actors at the theatre, the riders at the circus, or the posturers at the Poses Plastiques. Absolutely and literally, he is the only individual in Doncaster who stands by the brink of the full-flowing race-stream, and is not swept away by it in common with all the rest of his species. Who is this modern hermit, this recluse of the St. Leger-week, this inscrutably ungregarious being, who lives apart from the amusements and activities of his fellow-creatures? Surely, there is little difficulty in guessing that clearest and easiest of all riddles. Who could he be, but Mr. Thomas Idle?

Thomas had suffered himself to be taken to Doncaster, just as he would have suffered himself to be taken to any other place in the habitable globe which would guarantee him the temporary possession of a comfortable sofa to rest his ankle on. Once established at the hotel, with his leg on one cushion and his back against another, he formally declined taking the slightest interest in any circumstance whatever connected with the races, or with the people who were assembled to see them. Francis Goodchild, anxious that the hours should pass by his crippled travelling-companion as lightly as possible, suggested that his sofa should be moved to the window, and that he should amuse himself by looking out at the moving panorama of humanity, which the

view from it of the principal street presented. Thomas, however, steadily declined profiting by the suggestion.

'The farther I am from the window,' he said, 'the better, Brother Francis, I shall be pleased. I have nothing in common with the one prevalent idea of all those people who are passing in the street. Why should I care to look at them?'

'I hope I have nothing in common with the prevalent idea of a great many of them, either,' answered Goodchild, thinking of the sporting gentlemen whom he had met in the course of his wanderings about Doncaster. 'But, surely, among all the people who are walking by the house, at this very moment, you may find—'

'Not one living creature,' interposed Thomas, 'who is not, in one way or another, interested in horses, and who is not, in a greater or less degree, an admirer of them. Now, I hold opinions in reference to these particular members of the quadruped creation, which may lay claim (as I believe) to the disastrous distinction of being unpartaken by any other human being, civilised or savage, over the whole surface of the earth. Taking the horse as an animal in the abstract, Francis, I cordially despise him from every point of view.'

'Thomas,' said Goodchild, 'confinement to the house has begun to affect your biliary secretions. I shall go to the chemist's and get you some physic.'

'I object,' continued Thomas, quietly possessing himself of his friend's hat, which stood on a table near him,—'I object, first, to the personal appearance of the horse. I protest against the conventional idea of beauty, as attached to that animal. I think his nose too long, his forehead too low, and his legs (except in the case of the cart-horse) ridiculously thin by comparison with the size of his body. Again, considering how big an animal he is, I object to the contemptible delicacy of his constitution. Is he not the sickliest creature in creation? Does any child catch cold as easily as a horse? Does he not sprain his fetlock, for all his appearance of superior strength, as easily as I sprained my ankle! Furthermore, to take him from another point of view, what a helpless wretch he is! No fine lady requires more constant waiting-on than a horse. Other animals can make their own toilette: he must have a groom. You will tell me that this is because we want

to make his coat artificially glossy. Glossy! Come home with me, and see my cat,—my clever cat, who can groom herself! Look at your own dog! see how the intelligent creature curry-combs himself with his own honest teeth! Then, again, what a fool the horse is, what a poor, nervous fool! He will start at a piece of white paper in the road as if it was a lion. His one idea, when he hears a noise that he is not accustomed to, is to run away from it. What do you say to those two common instances of the sense and courage of this absurdly overpraised animal? I might multiply them to two hundred, if I chose to exert my mind and waste my breath, which I never do. I prefer coming at once to my last charge against the horse, which is the most serious of all, because it affects his moral character. I accuse him boldly, in his capacity of servant to man, of slyness and treachery. I brand him publicly, no matter how mild he may look about the eyes, or how sleek he may be about the coat, as a systematic betrayer, whenever he can get the chance, of the confidence reposed in him. What do you mean by laughing and shaking your head at me?'

'Oh, Thomas, Thomas!' said Goodchild. 'You had better give me my hat; you had better let me get you that physic.'

'I will let you get anything you like, including a composing draught for yourself,' said Thomas, irritably alluding to his fellow-apprentice's inexhaustible activity, 'if you will only sit quiet for five minutes longer, and hear me out. I say again the horse is a betrayer of the confidence reposed in him; and that opinion, let me add, is drawn from my own personal experience, and is not based on any fanciful theory whatever. You shall have two instances, two overwhelming instances. Let me start the first of these by asking, what is the distinguishing quality which the Shetland Pony has arrogated to himself, and is still perpetually trumpeting through the world by means of popular report and books on Natural History? I see the answer in your face: it is the quality of being Sure-Footed. He professes to have other virtues, such as hardiness and strength, which you may discover on trial; but the one thing which he insists on your believing, when you get on his back, is that he may be safely depended on not to tumble down with you. Very good. Some years ago, I was in Shetland with a party of friends. They insisted on taking me

with them to the top of a precipice that overhung the sea. It was a great distance off, but they all determined to walk to it except me. I was wiser then than I was with you at Carrock, and I determined to be carried to the precipice. There was no carriage-road in the island, and nobody offered (in consequence, as I suppose, of the imperfectly-civilised state of the country) to bring me a sedan-chair, which is naturally what I should have liked best. A Shetland pony was produced instead. I remembered my Natural History, I recalled popular report, and I got on the little beast's back, as any other man would have done in my position, placing implicit confidence in the sureness of his feet. And how did he repay that confidence? Brother Francis, carry your mind on from morning to noon. Picture to yourself a howling wilderness of grass and bog, bounded by low stony hills. Pick out one particular spot in that imaginary scene, and sketch me in it, with outstretched arms, curved back, and heels in the air, plunging head-foremost into a black patch of water and mud. Place just behind me the legs, the body, and the head of a sure-footed Shetland pony, all stretched flat on the ground, and you will have produced an accurate representation of a very lamentable fact. And the moral device, Francis, of this picture will be to testify that when gentlemen put confidence in the legs of Shetland ponies, they will find to their cost that they are leaning on nothing but broken reeds. There is my first instance—and what have you got to say to that?'

'Nothing, but that I want my hat,' answered Goodchild, starting up and walking restlessly about the room.

'You shall have it in a minute,' rejoined Thomas. 'My second instance—(Goodchild groaned and sat down again)—My second instance is more appropriate to the present time and place, for it refers to a race-horse. Two years ago an excellent friend of mine, who was desirous of prevailing on me to take regular exercise, and who was well enough acquainted with the weakness of my legs to expect no very active compliance with his wishes on their part, offered to make me a present of one of his horses. Hearing that the animal in question had started in life on the turf, I declined accepting the gift with many thanks; adding, by way of explanation, that I looked on a race-horse as a kind of

embodied hurricane, upon which no sane man of my character and habits could be expected to seat himself. My friend replied that, however appropriate my metaphor might be as applied to race-horses in general, it was singularly unsuitable as applied to the particular horse which he proposed to give me. From a foal upwards this remarkable animal had been the idlest and most sluggish of his race. Whatever capacities for speed he might possess he had kept so strictly to himself, that no amount of training had ever brought them out. He had been found hopelessly slow as a racer, and hopelessly lazy as a hunter, and was fit for nothing but a quiet, easy life of it with an old gentleman or an invalid. When I heard this account of the horse, I don't mind confessing that my heart warmed to him. Visions of Thomas Idle ambling serenely on the back of a steed as lazy as himself, presenting to a restless world the soothing and composite spectacle of a kind of sluggardly Centaur, too peaceable in his habits to alarm anybody, swam attractively before my eyes. I went to look at the horse in the stable. Nice fellow! he was fast asleep with a kitten on his back. I saw him taken out for an airing by the groom. If he had had trousers on his legs I should not have known them from my own, so deliberately were they lifted up, so gently were they put down, so slowly did they get over the ground. From that moment I gratefully accepted my friend's offer. I went home; the horse followed me—by a slow train. Oh, Francis, how devoutly I believed in that horse, how carefully I looked after all his little comforts! I had never gone the length of hiring a man-servant to wait on myself; but I went to the expense of hiring one to wait upon him. If I thought a little of myself when I bought the softest saddle that could be had for money, I thought also of my horse. When the man at the shop afterwards offered me spurs and a whip, I turned from him with horror. When I sallied out for my first ride, I went purposely unarmed with the means of hurrying my steed. He proceeded at his own pace every step of the way; and when he stopped, at last, and blew out both his sides with a heavy sigh, and turned his sleepy head and looked behind him, I took him home again, as I might take home an artless child who said to me, "If you please, sir, I am tired." For a week this complete harmony between me and my horse lasted undis-

turbed. At the end of that time, when he had made quite sure of my friendly confidence in his laziness, when he had thoroughly acquainted himself with all the little weaknesses of my seat (and their name is Legion), the smouldering treachery and ingratitude of the equine nature blazed out in an instant. Without the slightest provocation from me, with nothing passing him at the time but a pony-chaise driven by an old lady, he started in one instant from a state of sluggish depression to a state of frantic high spirits. He kicked, he plunged, he shied, he pranced, he capered fearfully. I sat on him as long as I could, and when I could sit no longer, I fell off. No, Francis! this is not a circumstance to be laughed at, but to be wept over. What would be said of a Man who had requited my kindness in that way? Range over all the rest of the animal creation, and where will you find me an instance of treachery so black as this? The cow that kicks down the milking-pail may have some reason for it; she may think herself taxed too heavily to contribute to the dilution of human tea and the greasing of human bread. The tiger who springs out on me unawares has the excuse of being hungry at the time, to say nothing of the further justification of being a total stranger to me. The very flea who surprises me in my sleep may defend his act of assassination on the ground that I, in my turn, am always ready to murder him when I am awake. I defy the whole body of Natural Historians to move me, logically, off the ground that I have taken in regard to the horse. Receive back your hat, Brother Francis, and go to the chemist's, if you please; for I have now done. Ask me to take anything you like, except an interest in the Doncaster races. Ask me to look at anything you like, except an assemblage of people all animated by feelings of a friendly and admiring nature towards the horse. You are a remarkably well-informed man, and you have heard of hermits. Look upon me as a member of that ancient fraternity, and you will sensibly add to the many obligations which Thomas Idle is proud to owe to Francis Goodchild.'

Here, fatigued by the effort of excessive talking, disputatious Thomas waved one hand languidly, laid his head back on the sofa-pillow, and calmly closed his eyes.

At a later period, Mr. Goodchild assailed his travelling companion boldly from the impregnable fortress of common sense.

But Thomas, though tamed in body by drastic discipline, was still as mentally unapproachable as ever on the subject of his favourite delusion.

The view from the window after Saturday's breakfast is altogether changed. The tradesmen's families have all come back again. The serious stationer's young woman of all work is shaking a duster out of the window of the combination breakfast-room; a child is playing with a doll, where Mr. Thurtell's hair was brushed; a sanitary scrubbing is in progress on the spot where Mr. Palmer's braces were put on. No signs of the Races are in the streets, but the tramps and the tumble-down-carts and trucks laden with drinking-forms and tables and remnants of booths, that are making their way out of the town as fast as they can. The Angel, which has been cleared for action all the week, already begins restoring every neat and comfortable article of furniture to its own neat and comfortable place. The Angel's daughters (pleasanter angels Mr. Idle and Mr. Goodchild never saw, nor more quietly expert in their business, nor more superior to the common vice of being above it), have a little time to rest, and to air their cheerful faces among the flowers in the yard. It is market-day. The market looks unusually natural, comfortable, and wholesome; the market-people too. The town seems quite restored, when, hark! a metallic bray—The Gong-donkey!

The wretched animal has not cleared off with the rest, but is here, under the window. How much more inconceivably drunk now, how much more begrimed of paw, how much more tight of calico hide, how much more stained and daubed and dirty and dung-hilly, from his horrible broom to his tender toes, who shall say! He cannot even shake the bray out of himself, now without laying his cheek so near to the mud of the street, that he pitches over after delivering it. Now, prone in the mud, and now backing himself up against shop-windows, the owners of which come out in terror to remove him; now, in the drinking-shop, and now in the tobacconist's, where he goes to buy tobacco, and makes his way into the parlour, and where he gets a cigar, which in half a minute he forgets to smoke; now dancing, now dozing, now cursing, and now complimenting My Lord, the Colonel, the Noble

Captain, and Your Honourable Worship, the Gong-donkey kicks up his heels, occasionally braying, until suddenly, he beholds the dearest friend he has in the world coming down the street.

The dearest friend the Gong-donkey has in the world, is a sort of Jackall, in a dull, mangy, black hide, of such small pieces that it looks as if it were made of blacking bottles turned inside out and cobbled together. The dearest friend in the world (inconceivably drunk too) advances at the Gong-donkey, with a hand on each thigh, in a series of humorous springs and stops, wagging his head as he comes. The Gong-donkey regarding him with attention and with the warmest affection, suddenly perceives that he is the greatest enemy he has in the world, and hits him hard in the countenance. The astonished Jackall closes with the Donkey, and they roll over and over in the mud, pummelling one another. A Police Inspector, supernaturally endowed with patience, who has long been looking on from the Guild-hall-steps, says, to a myrmidon, 'Lock 'em up! Bring 'em in!'

Appropriate finish to the Grand Race-Week. The Gong-donkey, captive and last trace of it, conveyed into limbo, where they cannot do better than keep him until next Race-Week. The Jackall is wanted too, and is much looked for, over the way and up and down. But, having had the good fortune to be undermost at the time of the capture, he has vanished into air.

On Saturday afternoon, Mr. Goodchild walks out and looks at the Course. It is quite deserted; heaps of broken crockery and bottles are raised to its memory; and correct cards and other fragments of paper are blowing about it, as the regulation little paper-books, carried by the French soldiers in their breasts, were seen, soon after the battle was fought, blowing idly about the plains of Waterloo.

Where will these present idle leaves be blown by the idle winds, and where will the last of them be one day lost and forgotten? An idle question, and an idle thought; and with it Mr. Idle fitly makes his bow, and Mr. Goodchild his, and thus ends the Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices.

THE END

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND

[1861]

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND

IN THREE CHAPTERS[1]

I

PICKING UP SCOT AND CINDERS

'And why Tom Tiddler's ground?' asked the Traveller.

'Because he scatters halfpence to Tramps and such-like,' returned the Landlord, 'and of course they pick 'em up. And this being done on his own land (which it is his own land, you observe, and were his family's before him), why it is but regarding the halfpence as gold and silver, and turning the ownership of the property a bit round your finger, and there you have the name of the children's game complete. And it 's appropriate too,' said the Landlord, with his favourite action of stooping a little, to look across the table out of window at vacancy, under the window-blind which was half drawn down. 'Leastwise it has been so considered by many gentlemen which have partook of chops and tea in the present humble parlour.'

The Traveller was partaking of chops and tea in the present humble parlour, and the Landlord's shot was fired obliquely at him.

'And you call him a Hermit?' said the Traveller.

'They call him such,' returned the Landlord, evading personal responsibility: 'he is in general so considered.'

'What *is* a Hermit?' asked the Traveller.

'What is it?' repeated the Landlord, drawing his hand across his chin.

[1] The original has seven chapters: but those set printed here were not written by Mr. Dickens.

'Yes, what is it?'

The Landlord stooped again, to get a more comprehensive view of vacancy under the window-blind, and—with an asphyxiated appearance on him as one unaccustomed to definition—made no answer.

'I 'll tell you what I suppose it to be,' said the Traveller. 'An abominably dirty thing.'

'Mr. Mopes is dirty, it cannot be denied,' said the Landlord.

'Intolerably conceited.'

'Mr. Mopes is vain of the life he leads, some do say,' replied the Landlord, as another concession.

'A slothful, unsavoury, nasty reversal of the laws of human nature,' said the Traveller; 'and for the sake of GOD'S working world and its wholesomeness, both moral and physical, I would put the thing on the treadmill (if I had my way) wherever I found it; whether on a pillar, or in a hole; whether on Tom Tiddler's ground, or the Pope of Rome's ground, or a Hindoo fakeer's ground, or any other ground.'

'I don't know about putting Mr. Mopes on the treadmill,' said the Landlord, shaking his head very seriously. 'There ain't a doubt but what he has got landed property.'

'How far may it be to this said Tom Tiddler's ground?' asked the Traveller.

'Put it at five mile,' returned the Landlord.

'Well! When I have done my breakfast,' said the Traveller, 'I 'll go there. I came over here this morning, to find it out and see it.'

'Many does,' observed the Landlord.

The conversation passed, in the Midsummer weather of no remote year of grace, down among the pleasant dales and trout-streams of a green English county. No matter what county. Enough that you may hunt there, shoot there, fish there, traverse long grass-grown Roman roads there, open ancient barrows there, see many a square mile of richly cultivated land there, and hold Arcadian talk with a bold peasantry, their country's pride, who will tell you (if you want to know) how pastoral housekeeping is done on nine shillings a week.

Mr. Traveller sat at his breakfast in the little sanded parlour of

the Peal of Bells village alehouse, with the dew and dust of an early walk upon his shoes—an early walk by road and meadow and coppice, that had sprinkled him bountifully with little blades of grass, and scraps of new hay, and with leaves both young and old, and with other such fragrant tokens of the freshness and wealth of summer. The window through which the landlord had concentrated his gaze upon vacancy was shaded, because the morning sun was hot and bright on the village street. The village street was like most other village streets: wide for its height, silent for its size, and drowsy in the dullest degree. The quietest little dwellings with the largest of window-shutters (to shut up Nothing as carefully as if it were the Mint, or the Bank of England), had called in the Doctor's house so suddenly, that his brass door-plate and three stories stood among them as conspicuous and different as the Doctor himself in his broadcloth, among the smock-frocks of his patients. The village residences seemed to have gone to law with a similar absence of consideration, for a score of weak little lath-and-plaster cabins clung in confusion about the Attorney's red-brick house, which, with glaring doorsteps and a most terrific scraper, seemed to serve all manner of ejectments upon them. They were as various as labourers—high-shouldered, wry-necked, one-eyed, goggle-eyed, squinting, bow-legged, knock-kneed, rheumatic, crazy. Some of the small tradesmen's houses, such as the crockery-shop and the harness-maker's, had a Cyclops window in the middle of the gable, within an inch or two of its apex, suggesting that some forlorn rural Prentice must wriggle himself into that apartment horizontally, when he retired to rest, after the manner of the worm. So bountiful in its abundance was the surrounding country, and so lean and scant the village, that one might have thought the village had sown and planted everything it once possessed, to convert the same into crops. This would account for the bareness of the little shops, the bareness of the few boards and trestles designed for market purposes in a corner of the street, the bareness of the obsolete Inn and Inn Yard, with the ominous inscription 'Excise Office' not yet faded out from the gateway, as indicating the very last thing that poverty could get rid of. This would also account for the determined abandonment of the village by one stray dog, fast lessening in the perspective

where the white posts and the pond were, and would explain his conduct on the hypothesis that he was going (through the act of suicide) to convert himself into manure, and become a part proprietor in turnips or mangold-wurzel.

Mr. Traveller having finished his breakfast and paid his moderate score, walked out to the threshold of the Peal of Bells, and, thence directed by the pointing finger of his host, betook himself towards the ruined hermitage of Mr. Mopes the hermit.

For, Mr. Mopes, by suffering everything about him to go to ruin, and by dressing himself in a blanket and skewer, and by steeping himself in soot and grease and other nastiness, had acquired great renown in all that country-side—far greater renown than he could ever have won for himself, if his career had been that of any ordinary Christian, or decent Hottentot. He had even blanketed and skewered and sooted and greased himself, into the London papers. And it was curious to find, as Mr. Traveller found by stopping for a new direction at this farmhouse or at that cottage as he went along, with how much accuracy the morbid Mopes had counted on the weakness of his neighbours to embellish him. A mist of home-brewed marvel and romance surrounded Mopes, in which (as in all fogs) the real proportions of the real object were extravagantly heightened. He had murdered his beautiful beloved in a fit of jealousy and was doing penance; he had made a vow under the influence of grief; he had made a vow under the influence of a fatal accident; he had made a vow under the influence of religion; he had made a vow under the influence of drink; he had made a vow under the influence of disappointment; he had never made any vow, but 'had got led into it' by the possession of a mighty and most awful secret; he was enormously rich, he was stupendously charitable, he was profoundly learned, he saw spectres, he knew and could do all kinds of wonders. Some said he went out every night, and was met by terrified wayfarers stalking along dark roads, others said he never went out, some knew his penance to be nearly expired, others had positive information that his seclusion was not a penance at all, and would never expire but with himself. Even, as to the easy facts of how old he was, or how long he had held verminous occupation of his blanket and skewer, no consistent information was to be got, from

those who must know if they would. He was represented as being all the ages between five-and-twenty and sixty, and as having been a hermit seven years, twelve, twenty, thirty,—though twenty, on the whole, appeared the favourite term.

'Well, well!' said Mr. Traveller. 'At any rate, let us see what a real live Hermit looks like.'

So, Mr. Traveller went on, and on, and on, until he came to Tom Tiddler's ground.

It was a nook in a rustic by-road, which the genius of Mopes had laid waste as completely, as if he had been born an Emperor and a Conqueror. Its centre object was a dwelling-house, sufficiently substantial, all the window-glass of which had been long ago abolished by the surprising genius of Mopes, and all the windows of which were barred across with rough-split logs of trees nailed over them on the outside. A rickyard, hip-high in vegetable rankness and ruin, contained outbuildings, from which the thatch had lightly fluttered away, on all the winds of all the seasons of the year, and from which the planks and beams had heavily dropped and rotted. The frosts and damps of winter, and the heats of summer, had warped what wreck remained, so that not a post or a board retained the position it was meant to hold, but everything was twisted from its purpose, like its owner, and degraded and debased. In this homestead of the sluggard, behind the ruined hedge, and sinking away among the ruined grass and the nettles, were the last perishing fragments of certain ricks: which had gradually mildewed and collapsed, until they looked like mounds of rotten honeycomb, or dirty sponge. Tom Tiddler's ground could even show its ruined water; for, there was a slimy pond into which a tree or two had fallen—one soppy trunk and branches lay across it then—which in its accumulation of stagnant weed, and in its black decomposition, and in all its foulness and filth, was almost comforting, regarded as the only water that could have reflected the shameful place without seeming polluted by that low office.

Mr. Traveller looked all around him on Tom Tiddler's ground, and his glance at last encountered a dusky Tinker lying among the weeds and rank grass, in the shade of the dwelling-house. A rough walking-staff lay on the ground by his side, and his head

rested on a small wallet. He met Mr. Traveller's eye without lifting up his head, merely depressing his chin a little (for he was lying on his back) to get a better view of him.

'Good day!' said Mr. Traveller.

'Same to you, if you like it,' returned the Tinker.

'Don't *you* like it? It 's a very fine day.'

'I ain't partickler in weather,' returned the Tinker, with a yawn.

Mr. Traveller had walked up to where he lay, and was looking down at him. 'This is a curious place,' said Mr. Traveller.

'Ay, I suppose so!' returned the Tinker. 'Tom Tiddler's ground, they call this.'

'Are you well acquainted with it?'

'Never saw it afore to-day,' said the Tinker, with another yawn, 'and don't care if I never see it again. There was a man here just now, told me what it was called. If you want to see Tom himself, you must go in at that gate.' He faintly indicated with his chin a little mean ruin of a wooden gate at the side of the house.

'Have you seen Tom?'

'No, and I ain't partickler to see him. I can see a dirty man anywhere.'

'He does not live in the house, then?' said Mr. Traveller, casting his eyes upon the house anew.

'The man said,' returned the Tinker, rather irritably,—'him as was here just now,—"this what you 're a lying on, mate, is Tom Tiddler's ground. And if you want to see Tom," he says, "you must go in at that gate." The man come out at that gate himself, and he ought to know.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Traveller.

'Though, perhaps,' exclaimed the Tinker, so struck by the brightness of his own idea, that it had the electric effect upon him of causing him to lift up his head an inch or so, 'perhaps he was a liar! He told some rum'uns—him as was here just now, did about this place of Tom's. He says—him as was here just now—"When Tom shut up the house, mate, to go to rack, the beds was left, all made, like as if somebody was a-going to sleep in every bed. And if you was to walk through the bedrooms now, you 'd see the ragged mouldy bedclothes a heaving and a heaving like seas. And

a heaving and a heaving with what?" he says. "Why, with the rats under 'em." '

'I wish I had seen that man,' Mr. Traveller remarked.

'You 'd have been welcome to see him instead of me seeing him,' growled the Tinker; 'for he was a long-winded one.'

Not without a sense of injury in the remembrance, the Tinker gloomily closed his eyes. Mr. Traveller, deeming the Tinker a short-winded one, from whom no further breath of information was to be derived, betook himself to the gate.

Swung upon its rusty hinges, it admitted him into a yard in which there was nothing to be seen but an outhouse attached to the ruined building, with a barred window in it. As there were traces of many recent footsteps under this window, and as it was a low window, and unglazed, Mr. Traveller made bold to peep within the bars. And there to be sure, he had a real live Hermit before him, and could judge how the real dead Hermits used to look.

He was lying on a bank of soot and cinders, on the floor, in front of a rusty fireplace. There was nothing else in the dark little kitchen, or scullery, or whatever his den had been originally used as, but a table with a litter of old bottles on it. A rat made a clatter among these bottles, jumped down, and ran over the real live Hermit on his way to his hole, or the man in *his* hole would not have been so easily discernible. Tickled in the face by the rat's tail, the owner of Tom Tiddler's ground opened his eyes, saw Mr. Traveller, started up, and sprang to the window.

'Humph!' thought Mr. Traveller, retiring a pace or two from the bars. 'A compound of Newgate, Bedlam, a Debtors' Prison in the worst time, a chimney-sweep, a mudlark, and the Noble Savage! A nice old family, the Hermit family. Hah!'

Mr. Traveller, thought this, as he silently confronted the sooty object in the blanket and skewer (in sober truth it wore nothing else), with the matted hair and the staring eyes. Further, Mr. Traveller thought, as the eye surveyed him with a very obvious curiosity in ascertaining the effect they produced, 'Vanity, vanity, vanity! Verily, all is vanity!'

'What is your name, sir, and where do you come from?' asked

Mr. Mopes the Hermit—with an air of authority, but in the ordinary human speech of one who has been to school.

Mr. Traveller answered the inquiries.

'Did you come here, sir, to see *me?*'

'I did. I heard of you, and I came to see you.—I know you like to be seen.' Mr. Traveller coolly threw the last words in, as a matter of course, to forestall an affectation of resentment or objection that he saw rising beneath the grease and grime of the face. They had their effect.

'So,' said the Hermit, after a momentary silence, unclasping the bars by which he had previously held, and seating himself behind them on the ledge of the window, with his bare legs and feet crouched up, 'you know I like to be seen?'

Mr. Traveller looked about him for something to sit on, and, observing a billet of wood in a corner, brought it near the window. Deliberately seating himself upon it, he answered, 'Just so.'

Each looked at the other, and each appeared to take some pains to get the measure of the other.

'Then you have come to ask me why I lead this life,' said the Hermit, frowning in a stormy manner. 'I never tell that to any human being. I will not be asked that.'

'Certainly you will not be asked that by me,' said Mr. Traveller, 'for I have not the slightest desire to know.'

'You are an uncouth man,' said Mr. Mopes the Hermit.

'You are another,' said Mr. Traveller.

The Hermit, who was plainly in the habit of over-awing his visitors with the novelty of his filth and his blanket and skewer, glared at his present visitor in some discomfiture and surprise: as if he had taken aim at him with a sure gun, and his piece had missed fire.

'Why do you come here at all?' he asked, after a pause.

'Upon my life,' said Mr. Traveller, 'I was made to ask myself that very question only a few minutes ago—by a Tinker too.'

As he glanced towards the gate in saying it, the Hermit glanced in that direction likewise.

'Yes. He is lying on his back in the sunlight outside,' said Mr. Traveller, as if he had been asked concerning the man, 'and he

won't come in; for he says—and really very reasonably—"What should I come in for? I can see a dirty man anywhere."'

'You are an insolent person. Go away from my premises. Go!' said the Hermit, in an imperious and angry tone.

'Come, come!' returned Mr. Traveller, quite undisturbed. 'This is a little too much. You are not going to call yourself clean? Look at your legs. And as to these being your premises:—they are in far too disgraceful a condition to claim any privilege of ownership, or anything else.'

The Hermit bounced down from his window-ledge, and cast himself on his bed of soot and cinders.

'I am not going,' said Mr. Traveller, glancing in after him; 'you won't get rid of me in that way. You had better come and talk.'

'I won't talk,' said the Hermit, flouncing round to get his back towards the window.

'Then I will,' said Mr. Traveller. 'Why should you take it ill that I have no curiosity to know why you live this highly absurd and highly indecent life? When I contemplate a man in a state of disease, surely there is no moral obligation on me to be anxious to know how he took it.'

After a short silence, the Hermit bounced up again, and came back to the barred window.

'What? You are not gone?' he said, affecting to have supposed that he was.

'Nor going,' Mr. Traveller replied; 'I design to pass this summer day here.'

'How dare you come, sir, upon my premises—' the Hermit was returning, when his visitor interrupted him.

'Really, you know, you must *not* talk about your premises. I cannot allow such a place as this to be dignified with the name of premises.'

'How dare you,' said the Hermit, shaking his bars, 'come in at my gate, to taunt me with being in a diseased state?'

'Why, Lord bless my soul,' returned the other, very composedly, 'you have not the face to say that you are in a wholesome state? Do allow me again to call your attention to your legs. Scrape yourself anywhere—with anything—and then tell me you

are in a wholesome state. The fact is, Mr. Mopes, that you are not only a Nuisance—'

'A Nuisance?' repeated the Hermit, fiercely.

'What is a place in this obscene state of dilapidation but a Nuisance? What is a man in your obscene state of dilapidation but a Nuisance? Then, as you very well know, you cannot do without an audience, and your audience is a Nuisance. You attract all the disreputable vagabonds and prowlers within ten miles around, by exhibiting yourself to them in that objectionable blanket, and by throwing copper money among them, and giving them drink out of those very dirty jars and bottles that I see in there (their stomachs need be strong!); and in short,' said Mr. Traveller, summing up in a quietly and comfortably settled manner, 'you are a Nuisance, and this kennel is a Nuisance, and the audience that you cannot possibly dispense with is a Nuisance, and the Nuisance is not merely a local Nuisance, because it is a general Nuisance to know that there *can be* such a Nuisance left in civilisation so very long after its time.'

'Will you go away? I have a gun in here,' said the Hermit.

'Pooh!'

'I *have!*'

'Now, I put it to you. Did I say you had not? And as to going away, didn't I say I am not going away? You have made me forget where I was. I now remember that I was remarking on your conduct being a Nuisance. Moreover, it is in the last and lowest degree inconsequent foolishness and weakness.'

'Weakness?' echoed the Hermit.

'Weakness,' said Mr. Traveller, with his former comfortably settled final air.

'I weak, you fool?' cried the Hermit, 'I, who have held to my purpose, and my diet, and my only bed there, all these years?'

'The more the years, the weaker you,' returned Mr. Traveller. 'Though the years are not so many as folks say, and as you willingly take credit for. The crust upon your face is thick and dark, Mr. Mopes, but I can see enough of you through it, to see that you are still a young man.'

'Inconsequent foolishness is lunacy, I suppose?' said the Hermit.

'I suppose it is very like it,' answered Mr. Traveller.

'Do I converse like a lunatic?'

'One of us two must have a strong presumption against him of being one, whether or no. Either the clean and decorously clad man, or the dirty and indecorously clad man. I don't say which.'

'Why, you self-sufficient bear,' said the Hermit, 'not a day passes but I am justified in my purpose by the conversations I hold here; not a day passes but I am shown, by everything I hear and see here, how right and strong I am in holding my purpose.'

Mr. Traveller, lounging easily on his billet of wood, took out a pocket pipe and began to fill it. 'Now, that a man,' he said, appealing to the summer sky as he did so, 'that a man—even behind bars, in a blanket and skewer—should tell me that he can see, from day to day, any orders or conditions of men, women, or children, who can by any possibility teach him that it is anything but the miserablest drivelling for a human creature to quarrel with his social nature—not to go so far as to say, to renounce his common human decency, for that is an extreme case; or who can teach him that he can in any wise separate himself from his kind and the habits of his kind, without becoming a deteriorated spectacle calculated to give the Devil (and perhaps the monkeys) pleasure,—is something wonderful! I repeat,' said Mr. Traveller, beginning to smoke, 'the unreasoning hardihood of it is something wonderful—even in a man with the dirt upon him an inch or two thick—behind bars—in a blanket and skewer!'

The Hermit looked at him irresolutely, and retired to his soot and cinders and lay down, and got up again and came to the bars, and again looked at him irresolutely, and finally said with sharpness: 'I don't like tobacco.'

'I don't like dirt,' rejoined Mr. Traveller; 'tobacco is an excellent disinfectant. We shall both be the better for my pipe. It is my intention to sit here through this summer day, until that blessed summer sun sinks low in the west, and to show you what a poor creature you are, through the lips of every chance wayfarer who may come in at your gate.'

'What do you mean?' inquired the Hermit, with a furious air.

'I mean that yonder is your gate, and there are you, and here am I; I mean that I know it to be a moral impossibility that any

person can stray in at that gate from any point of the compass, with any sort of experience, gained at first hand, or derived from another, that can confute me and justify you.'

'You are an arrogant and boastful hero,' said the Hermit. 'You think yourself profoundly wise.'

'Bah!' returned Mr. Traveller, quietly smoking. 'There is little wisdom in knowing that every man must be up and doing, and that all mankind are made dependent on one another.'

'You have companions outside,' said the Hermit. 'I am not to be imposed upon by your assumed confidence in the people who may enter.'

'A depraved distrust,' returned the visitor, compassionately raising his eyebrows, 'of course belongs to your state. I can't help that.'

'Do you mean to tell me you have no confederates?'

'I mean to tell you nothing but what I have told you. What I have told you is, that it is a moral impossibility that any son or daughter of Adam can stand on this ground that I put my foot on, or on any ground that mortal treads, and gainsay the healthy tenure on which we hold our existence.'

'Which is,' sneered the Hermit, 'according to you—'

'Which is,' returned the other, 'according to Eternal Providence, that we must arise and wash our faces and do our gregarious work and act and re-act on one another, leaving only the idiot and the palsied to sit blinking in the corner. Come!' apostrophising the gate. 'Open Sesame! Show his eyes and grieve his heart! I don't care who comes, for I know what must come of it!'

With that, he faced round a little on his billet of wood towards the gate; and Mr. Mopes, the Hermit, after two or three ridiculous bounces of indecision at his bed and back again, submitted to what he could not help himself against, and coiled himself on his window-ledge, holding to his bars and looking out rather anxiously.

VI

PICKING UP MISS KIMMEENS

THE day was by this time waning, when the gate again opened and, with the brilliant golden light that streamed from the declining sun and touched the very bars of the sooty creature's den there passed in a little child; a little girl with beautiful bright hair. She wore a plain straw hat, had a door-key in her hand, and tripped towards Mr. Traveller as if she were pleased to see him and were going to repose some childish confidence in him, when she caught sight of the figure behind the bars, and started back in terror.

'Don't be alarmed, darling!' said Mr. Traveller, taking her by the hand.

'Oh, but I don't like it!' urged the shrinking child; 'it 's dreadful.'

'Well! I don't like it either,' said Mr. Traveller.

'Who has put it there?' asked the little girl. 'Does it bite?'

'No,—only barks. But can't you make up your mind to see it, my dear?' For she was covering her eyes.

'O no, no, no!' returned the child. 'I cannot bear to look at it!'

Mr. Traveller turned his head towards his friend in there, as much as to ask him how he liked that instance of his success, and then took the child out at the still open gate, and stood talking to her for some half an hour in the mellow sunlight. At length he returned, encouraging her as she held his arm with both her hands; and laying his protecting hand upon her head and smoothing her pretty hair, he addressed his friend behind the bars as follows:

Miss Pupford's establishment for six young ladies of tender years, is an establishment of a compact nature, an establishment in miniature, quite a pocket establishment. Miss Pupford, Miss Pupford's assistant with the Parisian accent, Miss Pupford's cook, and Miss Pupford's housemaid, complete what Miss Pup-

ford calls the educational and domestic staff of her Lilliputian College.

Miss Pupford is one of the most amiable of her sex; it necessarily follows that she possesses a sweet temper, and would own to the possession of a great deal of sentiment if she considered it quite reconcilable with her duty to parents. Deeming it not in the bond, Miss Pupford keeps it as far out of sight as she can—which (God bless her!) is not very far.

Miss Pupford's assistant with the Parisian accent, may be regarded as in some sort an inspired lady, for she never conversed with a Parisian, and she was never out of England—except once in the pleasure-boat Lively, in the foreign waters that ebb and flow two miles off Margate at high water. Even under those geographically favourable circumstances for the acquisition of the French language in its utmost politeness and purity, Miss Pupford's assistant did not fully profit by the opportunity; for the pleasure-boat, Lively, so strongly asserted its title to its name on that occasion, that she was reduced to the condition of lying in the bottom of the boat pickling in brine—as if she were being salted down for the use of the Navy—undergoing at the same time great mental alarm, corporeal distress, and clear-starching derangement.

When Miss Pupford and her assistant first foregathered, is not known to men, or pupils. But, it was long ago. A belief would have established itself among pupils that the two once went to school together, were it not for the difficulty and audacity of imagining Miss Pupford born without mittens, and without a front, and without a bit of gold wire among her front teeth, and without little dabs of powder on her neat little face and nose. Indeed, whenever Miss Pupford gives a little lecture on the mythology of the misguided heathens (always carefully excluding Cupid from recognition), and tells how Minerva sprang, perfectly equipped, from the brain of Jupiter, she is half supposed to hint, 'So I myself came into the world, completely up in Pinnock, Magnall, Tables, and the use of the Globes.'

Howbeit, Miss Pupford and Miss Pupford's assistant are old, old friends. And it is thought by pupils that, after pupils are gone to bed, they even call one another by their christian names in the quiet little parlour. For, once upon a time on a thunderous

afternoon, when Miss Pupford fainted away without notice, Miss Pupford's assistant (never heard, before or since, to address her otherwise than as Miss Pupford) ran to her, crying out 'My dearest Euphemia!' And Euphemia is Miss Pupford's christian name on the sampler (date picked out) hanging up in the College-hall, where the two peacocks, terrified to death by some German text that is waddling down hill after them out of a cottage, are scuttling away to hide their profiles in two immense bean-stalks growing out of flower-pots.

Also, there is a notion latent among pupils, that Miss Pupford was once in love, and that the beloved object still moves upon this ball. Also, that he is a public character, and a personage of vast consequence. Also, that Miss Pupford's assistant knows all about it. For, sometimes of an afternoon when Miss Pupford has been reading the paper through her little gold eye-glass (it is necessary to read it on the spot, as the boy calls for it, with ill-conditioned punctuality, in an hour), she has become agitated, and has said to her assistant 'G!' Then Miss Pupford's assistant has gone to Miss Pupford, and Miss Pupford has pointed out, with her eye-glass, G in the paper, and then Miss Pupford's assistant has read about G, and has shown sympathy. So stimulated has the pupil-mind been in its time to curiosity on the subject of G, that once, under temporary circumstances favourable to the bold sally, one fearless pupil did actually obtain possession of the paper, and range all over it in search of G, who had been discovered therein by Miss Pupford not ten minutes before. But no G could be identified, except one capital offender who had been executed in a state of great hardihood, and it was not to be supposed that Miss Pupford could ever have loved *him*. Besides, he couldn't be always being executed. Besides, he got into the paper again, alive, within a month.

On the whole, it is suspected by the pupil-mind that G is a short, chubby old gentleman, with little black sealing-wax boots up to his knees, whom a sharply observant pupil, Miss Linx, when she once went to Tunbridge Wells with Miss Pupford for the holidays, reported on her return (privately and confidentially) to have seen come capering up to Miss Pupford on the Promenade, and to have detected in the act of squeezing Miss Pupford's hand,

and to have heard pronounce the words, 'Cruel Euphemia, ever thine!'—or something like that. Miss Linx hazarded a guess that he might be House of Commons, or Money Market, or Court Circular, or Fashionable Movements; which would account for his getting into the paper so often. But, it was fatally objected by the pupil-mind, that none of those notabilities could possibly be spelt with a G.

There are other occasions, closely watched and perfectly comprehended by the pupil-mind, when Miss Pupford imparts with mystery to her assistant that there is special excitement in the morning paper. These occasions are, when Miss Pupford finds an old pupil coming out under the head Births, or Marriages. Affectionate tears are invariably seen in Miss Pupford's meek little eyes when this is the case; and the pupil-mind, perceiving that its order has distinguished itself—though the fact is never mentioned by Miss Pupford—becomes elevated, and feels that it likewise is reserved for greatness.

Miss Pupford's assistant with the Parisian accent has a little more bone than Miss Pupford, but is of the same trim, orderly, diminutive cast, and, from long contemplation, admiration, and imitation of Miss Pupford, has grown like her. Being entirely devoted to Miss Pupford, and having a pretty talent for pencil-drawing, she once made a portrait of that lady: which was so instantly identified and hailed by the pupils, that it was done on stone at five shillings. Surely the softest and milkiest stone that ever was quarried, received that likeness of Miss Pupford! The lines of her placid little nose are so undecided in it that strangers to the work of art are observed to be exceedingly perplexed as to where the nose goes to, and involuntarily feel their own noses in a disconcerted manner. Miss Pupford being represented in a state of dejection at an open window, ruminating over a bowl of gold fish, the pupil-mind has settled that the bowl was presented by G, and that he wreathed the bowl with flowers of soul, and that Miss Pupford is depicted as waiting for him on a memorable occasion when he was behind his time.

The approach of the last Midsummer holidays had a particular interest for the pupil-mind, by reason of its knowing that Miss Pupford was bidden, on the second day of these holidays, to the

nuptials of a former pupil. As it was impossible to conceal the fact—so extensive were the dress-making preparations—Miss Pupford openly announced it. But, she held it due to parents to make the announcement with an air of gentle melancholy, as if marriage were (as indeed it exceptionally has been) rather a calamity. With an air of softened resignation and pity, therefore, Miss Pupford went on with her preparations: and meanwhile no pupil ever went upstairs, or came down, without peeping in at the door of Miss Pupford's bedroom (when Miss Pupford wasn't there), and bringing back some surprising intelligence concerning the bonnet.

The extensive preparations being completed on the day before the holidays, an unanimous entreaty was preferred to Miss Pupford by the pupil-mind—finding expression through Miss Pupford's assistant—that she would deign to appear in all her splendour. Miss Pupford consenting, presented a lovely spectacle. And although the oldest pupil was barely thirteen, every one of the six became in two minutes perfect in the shape, cut, colour, price, and quality, of every article Miss Pupford wore.

Thus delightfully ushered in, the holidays began. Five of the six pupils kissed little Kitty Kimmeens twenty times over (round total, one hundred times, for she was very popular), and so went home. Miss Kitty Kimmeens remained behind, for her relations and friends were all in India, far away. A self-helpful, steady little child is Miss Kitty Kimmeens: a dimpled child too, and a loving.

So, the great marriage-day came, and Miss Pupford, quite as much fluttered as any bride could be (G! thought Miss Kitty Kimmeens), went away, splendid to behold, in the carriage that was sent for her. But not Miss Pupford only went away; for Miss Pupford's assistant went away with her, on a dutiful visit to an aged uncle—though surely the venerable gentleman couldn't live in the gallery of the church where the marriage was to be, thought Miss Kitty Kimmeens—and yet Miss Pupford's assistant had let out that she was going there. Where the cook was going, didn't appear, but she generally conveyed to Miss Kimmeens that she was bound, rather against her will, on a pilgrimage to perform some pious office that rendered new ribbons necessary to her best bonnet, and also sandals to her shoes.

'So you see,' said the housemaid, when they were all gone, 'there 's nobody left in the house but you and me, Miss Kimmeens.'

'Nobody else,' said Miss Kitty Kimmeens, shaking her curls a little sadly. 'Nobody!'

'And you wouldn't like your Bella to go too; would you, Miss Kimmeens?' said the housemaid. (She being Bella.)

'N—no,' answered little Miss Kimmeens.

'Your poor Bella is forced to stay with you, whether she likes it or not; ain't she, Miss Kimmeens?'

'*Don't* you like it?' inquired Kitty.

'Why, you 're such a darling, Miss, that it would be unkind of your Bella to make objections. Yet my brother-in-law has been took unexpected bad by this morning's post. And your poor Bella is much attached to him, letting alone her favourite sister, Miss Kimmeens.'

'Is he very ill?' asked little Kitty.

'Your poor Bella has her fears so, Miss Kimmeens,' returned the housemaid, with her apron at her eyes. 'It was but his inside, it is true, but it might mount, and the doctor said that if it mounted he wouldn't answer.' Here the housemaid was so overcome that Kitty administered the only comfort she had ready: which was a kiss.

'If it hadn't been for disappointing Cook, dear Miss Kimmeens,' said the housemaid, 'your Bella would have asked her to stay with you. For Cook is sweet company, Miss Kimmeens, much more so than your own poor Bella.'

'But you are very nice, Bella.'

'Your Bella could wish to be so, Miss Kimmeens,' returned the housemaid, 'but she knows full well that it do not lay in her power this day.'

With which despondent conviction, the housemaid drew a heavy sigh, and shook her head, and dropped it on one side.

'If it had been anyways right to disappoint Cook,' she pursued, in a contemplative and abstracted manner, 'it might have been so easy done! I could have got to my brother-in-law's, and had the best part of the day there, and got back, long before our ladies come home at night, and neither the one nor the other of

them need never have known it. Not that Miss Pupford would at all object, but that it might put her out, being tender-hearted. Hows'ever, your own poor Bella, Miss Kimmeens,' said the housemaid, rousing herself, 'is forced to stay with you, and you 're a precious love, if not a liberty.'

'Bella,' said little Kitty, after a short silence.

'Call your own poor Bella, *your* Bella, dear,' the housemaid besought her.

'My Bella, then.'

'Bless your considerate heart!' said the housemaid.

'If you would not mind leaving me, I should not mind being left. I am not afraid to stay in the house alone. And you need not be uneasy on my account, for I would be very careful to do no harm.'

'O! As to harm, you more than sweetest, if not a liberty,' exclaimed the housemaid, in a rapture, 'your Bella could trust you anywhere, being so steady, and so answerable. The oldest head in this house (me and Cook says), but for its bright hair, is Miss Kimmeens. But no, I will not leave you; for you would think your Bella unkind.'

'But if you are my Bella, you *must* go,' returned the child.

'Must I?' said the housemaid, rising, on the whole with alacrity. 'What must be, must be, Miss Kimmeens. Your own poor Bella acts according, though unwilling. But go or stay, your own poor Bella loves you, Miss Kimmeens.'

It was certainly go, and not stay, for within five minutes Miss Kimmeens's own poor Bella—so much improved in point of spirits as to have grown almost sanguine on the subject of her brother-in-law—went her way, in apparel that seemed to have been expressly prepared for some festive occasion. Such are the changes of this fleeting world, and so short-sighted are we poor mortals!

When the house door closed with a bang and a shake, it seemed to Miss Kimmeens to be a very heavy house door, shutting her up in a wilderness of a house. But, Miss Kimmeens being, as before stated, of a self-reliant and methodical character, presently began to parcel out the long summer-day before her.

And first she thought she would go all over the house, to make quite sure that nobody with a great-coat on and a carving-knife

in it, had got under one of the beds or into one of the cupboards. Not that she had ever before been troubled by the image of anybody armed with a great-coat and a carving-knife, but that it seemed to have been shaken into existence by the shake and the bang of the great street door, reverberating through the solitary house. So, little Miss Kimmeens looked under the five empty beds of the five departed pupils, and looked under her own bed, and looked under Miss Pupford's bed, and looked under Miss Pupford's assistant's bed. And when she had done this, and was making the tour of the cupboards, the disagreeable thought came into her young head, What a very alarming thing it would be to find somebody with a mask on, like Guy Fawkes, hiding bolt upright in a corner and pretending not to be alive! However, Miss Kimmeens having finished her inspection without making any such uncomfortable discovery, sat down in her tidy little manner to needlework, and began stitching away at a great rate.

The silence all about her soon grew very oppressive, and the more so because of the odd inconsistency that the more silent it was, the more noises there were. The noise of her own needle and thread as she stitched, was infinitely louder in her ears than the stitching of all the six pupils, and of Miss Pupford, and of Miss Pupford's assistant, all stitching away at once on a highly emulative afternoon. Then, the school-room clock conducted itself in a way in which it had never conducted itself before—fell lame, somehow, and yet persisted in running on as hard and loud as it could: the consequence of which behaviour was, that it staggered among the minutes in a state of the greatest confusion, and knocked them about in all directions without appearing to get on with its regular work. Perhaps this alarmed the stairs: but be that as it might, they began to creak in a most unusual manner, and then the furniture began to crack, and then poor little Miss Kimmeens, not liking the furtive aspect of things in general, began to sing as she stitched. But, it was not her own voice that she heard—it was somebody else making believe to be Kitty, and singing excessively flat, without any heart—so as that would never mend matters, she left off again.

By and by, the stitching became so palpable a failure that Miss Kitty Kimmeens folded her work neatly and put it away in its

box, and gave it up. Then the question arose about reading. But no; the book that was so delightful when there was somebody she loved for her eyes to fall on when they rose from the page, had not more heart in it than her own singing now. The book went to its shelf as the needle-work had gone to its box, and, since something *must* be done—thought the child, 'I 'll go put my room to rights.'

She shared her room with her dearest little friend among the other five pupils, and why then should she now conceive a lurking dread of the little friend's bedstead? But she did. There was a stealthy air about its innocent white curtains, and there were even dark hints of a dead girl lying under the coverlet. The great want of human company, the great need of a human face, began now to express itself in the facility with which the furniture put on strange exaggerated resemblances to human looks. A chair with a menacing frown was horribly out of temper in a corner; a most vicious chest of drawers snarled at her from between the windows. It was no relief to escape from those monsters to the looking-glass, for the reflection said, 'What? Is that you all alone there? How you stare!' And the background was all a great void stare as well.

The day dragged on, dragging Kitty with it very slowly by the hair of her head, until it was time to eat. There were good provisions in the pantry, but their right flavour and relish had evaporated with the five pupils, and Miss Pupford, and Miss Pupford's assistant, and the cook and housemaid. Where was the use of laying the cloth symmetrically for one small guest, who had gone on ever since the morning growing smaller and smaller, while the empty house had gone on swelling larger and larger? The very Grace came out wrong, for who were 'we' who were going to receive and be thankful? So, Miss Kimmeens was *not* thankful, and found herself taking her dinner in very slovenly style—gobbling it up, in short, rather after the manner of the lower animals, not to particularise the pigs.

But, this was by no means the worst of the change wrought out in the naturally loving and cheery little creature as the solitary day wore on. She began to brood and be suspicious. She discovered that she was full of wrongs and injuries. All the people

she knew, got tainted by her lonely thoughts and turned bad.

It was all very well for Papa, a widower in India, to send her home to be educated, and to pay a handsome round sum every year for her to Miss Pupford, and to write charming letters to his darling little daughter; but what did he care for her being left by herself, when he was (as no doubt he always was) enjoying himself in company from morning till night? Perhaps he only sent her here, after all, to get her out of the way. It looked like it—looked like it today, that is, for she had never dreamed of such a thing before.

And this old pupil who was being married. It was insupportably conceited and selfish in the old pupil to be married. She was very vain, and very glad to show off; but it was highly probable that she wasn't pretty; and even if she were pretty (which Miss Kimmeens now totally denied), she had no business to be married; and, even if marriage were conceded, she had no business to ask Miss Pupford to her wedding. As to Miss Pupford, she was too old to go to any wedding. She ought to know that. She had much better attend to her business. She had thought she looked nice in the morning, but she didn't look nice. She was a stupid old thing. G was another stupid old thing. Miss Pupford's assistant was another. They were all stupid old things together.

More than that: it began to be obvious that this was a plot. They had said to one another, 'Never mind Kitty; you get off, and I 'll get off; and we 'll leave Kitty to look after herself. Who cares for *her?*' To be sure they were right in that question; for who *did* care for her, a poor little lonely thing against whom they all planned and plotted? Nobody, nobody! Here Kitty sobbed.

At all other times she was the pet of the whole house, and loved her five companions in return with a child's tenderest and most ingenuous attachment; but now, the five companions put on ugly colours, and appeared for the first time under a sullen cloud. There they were, all at their homes that day, being made much of, being taken out, being spoilt and made disagreeable, and caring nothing for her. It was like their artful selfishness always to tell her when they came back, under pretence of confidence and friendship, all those details about where they had been, and what they had done and seen, and how often they had said, 'O! If we

had only darling little Kitty here!' Here indeed! I dare say! When they came back after the holidays, they were used to being received by Kitty, and to saying that coming to Kitty was like coming to another home. Very well then, why did they go away? If they meant it, why did they go away? Let them answer that. But they didn't mean it, and couldn't answer that, and they didn't tell the truth, and people who didn't tell the truth were hateful. When they came back next time, they should be received in a new manner; they should be avoided and shunned.

And there, the while she sat all alone revolving how ill she was used, and how much better she was than the people who were not alone, the wedding breakfast was going on: no question of it! With a nasty great bride-cake, and with those ridiculous orange-flowers, and with that conceited bride, and that hideous bride-groom, and those heartless bridesmaids, and Miss Pupford stuck up at the table! They thought they were enjoying themselves, but it would come home to them one day to have thought so. They would all be dead in a few years, let them enjoy themselves ever so much. It was a religious comfort to know that.

It was such a comfort to know it, that little Miss Kitty Kimmeens suddenly sprang from the chair in which she had been musing in a corner, and cried out, 'O those envious thoughts are not mine, O this wicked creature isn't me! Help me, somebody! I go wrong, alone by my weak self! Help me, anybody!'

'—Miss Kimmeens is not a professed philosopher, sir,' said Mr. Traveller, presenting her at the barred window, and smoothing her shining hair, 'but I apprehend there was some tincture of Philosophy in her words, and in the prompt action with which she followed them. That action was, to emerge from her unnatural solitude, and look abroad for wholesome sympathy, to bestow and to receive. Her footsteps strayed to this gate, bringing her here by chance, as an opposite contrast to you. The child came out, sir. If you have the wisdom to learn from a child (but I doubt it, for that requires more wisdom than one in your condition would seem to possess), you cannot do better than imitate the child, and come out too—from that very demoralising hutch of yours.'

VII

PICKING UP THE TINKER

It was now sunset. The Hermit had betaken himself to his bed of cinders half an hour ago, and lying on it in his blanket and skewer with his back to the window, took not the smallest heed of the appeal addressed to him.

All that had been said for the last two hours, had been said to a tinkling accompaniment performed by the Tinker, who had got to work upon some villager's pot or kettle, and was working briskly outside. This music still continuing, seemed to put it into Mr. Traveller's mind to have another word or two with the Tinker. So, holding Miss Kimmeens (with whom he was now on the most friendly terms) by the hand, he went out at the gate to where the Tinker was seated at his work on the patch of grass on the opposite side of the road, with his wallet of tools open before him, and his little fire smoking.

'I am glad to see you employed,' said Mr. Traveller.

'I am glad to *be* employed,' returned the Tinker, looking up as he put the finishing touches to his job. 'But why are you glad?'

'I thought you were a lazy fellow when I saw you this morning.'

'I was only disgusted,' said the Tinker.

'Do you mean with the fine weather?'

'With the fine weather?' repeated the Tinker, staring.

'You told me you were not particular as to weather, and I thought—'

'Ha, ha! How should such as me get on, if we *was* particular as to weather? We must take it as it comes, and make the best of it. There 's something good in all weathers. If it don't happen to be good for my work to-day, it 's good for some other man's to-day, and will come round to me to-morrow. We must all live.'

'Pray shake hands,' said Mr. Traveller.

'Take care, sir,' was the Tinker's caution, as he reached up his hand in surprise; 'the black comes off.'

'I am glad of it,' said Mr. Traveller. 'I have been for several hours among other black that does not come off.'

'You are speaking of Tom in there?'

'Yes.'

'Well now,' said the Tinker, blowing the dust off his job: which was finished. 'Ain't it enough to disgust a pig, if he could give his mind to it?'

'If he could give his mind to it,' returned the other, smiling, 'the probability is that he wouldn't be a pig.'

'There you clench the nail,' returned the Tinker. 'Then what 's to be said for Tom?'

'Truly, very little.'

'Truly nothing you mean, sir,' said the Tinker, as he put away his tools.

'A better answer, and (I freely acknowledge) my meaning. I infer that he was the cause of your disgust?'

'Why, look 'ee here, sir,' said the Tinker, rising to his feet, and wiping his face on the corner of his black apron energetically; 'I leave you to judge!—I ask you!—Last night I has a job that needs to be done in the night, and I works all night. Well, there 's nothing in that. But this morning I comes along this road here, looking for a sunny and soft spot to sleep in, and I sees this desolation and ruination. I 've lived myself in desolation and ruination; I knows many a fellow-creetur that 's forced to live life long in desolation and ruination; and I sits me down and takes pity on it, as I casts my eyes about. Then comes up the long-winded one as I told you of, from that gate, and spins himself out like a silkworm concerning the Donkey (if my Donkey at home will excuse me) as has made it all—made it of his own choice! And tells me, if you please, of his likewise choosing to go ragged and naked, and grimy—maskerading, mountebanking, in what is the real hard lot of thousands and thousands! Why, then I say it 's a unbearable and nonsensical piece of inconsistency, and I 'm disgusted. I 'm ashamed and disgusted!'

'I wish you would come and look at him,' said Mr. Traveller, clapping the Tinker on the shoulder.

'Not I, sir,' he rejoined. '*I* ain't a going to flatter him up by looking at him!'

'But he is asleep.'

'Are you sure he is asleep?' asked the Tinker, with an unwilling air, as he shouldered his wallet.

'Sure.'

'Then I 'll look at him for a quarter of a minute,' said the Tinker, 'since you so much wish it; but not a moment longer.'

They all three went back across the road; and, through the barred window, by the dying glow of the sunset coming in at the gate—which the child held open for its admission—he could be pretty clearly discerned lying on his bed.

'You see him?' asked Mr. Traveller.

'Yes,' returned the Tinker, 'and he 's worse than I thought him.'

Mr. Traveller then whispered in few words what he had done since morning; and asked the Tinker what he thought of that?

'I think,' returned the Tinker, as he turned from the window, 'that you 've wasted a day on him.'

'I think so too; though not, I hope, upon myself. Do you happen to be going anywhere near the Peal of Bells?'

'That 's my direct way, sir,' said the Tinker.

'I invite you to supper there. And as I learn from this young lady that she goes some three-quarters of a mile in the same direction, we will drop her on the road, and we will spare time to keep her company at her garden gate until her own Bella comes home.'

So, Mr. Traveller, and the child, and the Tinker, went along very amicably in the sweet-scented evening; and the moral with which the Tinker dismissed the subject was, that he said in his trade that metal that rotted for want of use, had better be left to rot, and couldn't rot too soon, considering how much true metal rotted from over-use and hard service.

HUNTED DOWN

[1860]

HUNTED DOWN

I

Most of us see some romances in life. In my capacity as Chief Manager of a Life Assurance Office, I think I have within the last thirty years seen more romances than the generality of men, however unpromising the opportunity may, at first sight, seem.

As I have retired, and live at my ease, I possess the means that I used to want, of considering what I have seen, at leisure. My experiences have a more remarkable aspect, so reviewed, than they had when they were in progress. I have come home from the Play now, and can recall the scenes of the Drama upon which the curtain has fallen, free from the glare, bewilderment, and bustle of the Theatre.

Let me recall one of these Romances of the real world.

There is nothing truer than physiognomy, taken in connection with manner. The art of reading that book of which Eternal Wisdom obliges every human creature to present his or her own page with the individual character written on it, is a difficult one, perhaps, and is little studied. It may require some natural aptitude, and it must require (for everything does) some patience and some pains. That these are not usually given to it,—that numbers of people accept a few stock commonplace expressions of the face as the whole list of characteristics, and neither seek nor know the refinements that are truest,—that You, for instance, give a great deal of time and attention to the reading of music, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Hebrew, if you please, and do not qualify yourself to read the face of the master or mistress looking over your shoulder teaching it to you,—I assume to be five hundred times more probable than improbable. Perhaps a little self-sufficiency may be at the bottom of this; facial expression requires no study

from you, you think; it comes by nature to you to know enough about it, and you are not to be taken in.

I confess, for my part, that I *have* been taken in, over and over again. I have been taken in by acquaintances, and I have been taken in (of course) by friends; far oftener by friends than by any other class of persons. How came I to be so deceived? Had I quite misread their faces?

No. Believe me, my first impression of those people, founded on face and manner alone, was invariably true. My mistake was in suffering them to come nearer to me and explain themselves away.

II

THE partition which separated my own office from our general outer office in the City was of thick plate-glass. I could see through it what passed in the outer office, without hearing a word. I had it put up in place of a wall that had been there for years, —ever since the house was built. It is no matter whether I did or did not make the change in order that I might derive my first impression of strangers who came to us on business, from their faces alone, without being influenced by anything they said. Enough to mention that I turned my glass partition to that account, and that a Life Assurance Office is at all times exposed to be practised upon by the most crafty and cruel of the human race.

It was through my glass partition that I first saw the gentleman whose story I am going to tell.

He had come in without my observing it, and had put his hat and umbrella on the broad counter, and was bending over it to take some papers from one of the clerks. He was about forty or so, dark, exceedingly well dressed in black,—being in mourning, —and the hand he extended with a polite air, had a particularly well-fitting black-kid glove upon it. His hair, which was elaborately brushed and oiled, was parted straight up the middle; and he presented this parting to the clerk, exactly (to my thinking) as if he had said, in so many words: 'You must take me, if you please, my friend, just as I show myself. Come straight up here,

follow the gravel path, keep off the grass, I allow no trespassing.'

I conceived a very great aversion to that man the moment I thus saw him.

He had asked for some of our printed forms, and the clerk was giving them to him and explaining them. An obliged and agreeable smile was on his face, and his eyes met those of the clerk with a sprightly look. (I have known a vast quantity of nonsense talked about bad men not looking you in the face. Don't trust that conventional idea. Dishonesty will stare honesty out of countenance, any day in the week, if there is anything to be got by it.)

I saw, in the corner of his eyelash, that he became aware of my looking at him. Immediately he turned the parting in his hair toward the glass partition, as if he said to me with a sweet smile, 'Straight up here, if you please. Off the grass!'

In a few moments he had put on his hat and taken up his umbrella, and was gone.

I beckoned the clerk into my room, and asked, 'Who was that?'

He had the gentleman's card in his hand. 'Mr. Julius Slinkton, Middle Temple.'

'A barrister, Mr. Adams?'

'I think not, sir.'

'I should have thought him a clergyman, but for his having no Reverend here,' said I.

'Probably, from his appearance,' Mr. Adams replied, 'he is reading for orders.'

I should mention that he wore a dainty white cravat, and dainty linen altogether.

'What did he want, Mr. Adams?'

'Merely a form of proposal, sir, and form of reference.'

'Recommended here? Did he say?'

'Yes, he said he was recommended here by a friend of yours. He noticed you, but said that as he had not the pleasure of your personal acquaintance he would not trouble you.'

'Did he know my name?'

'O yes, sir! He said, "There *is* Mr. Sampson, I see!"'

'A well-spoken gentleman, apparently?'

'Remarkably so, sir.'

'Insinuating manners, apparently?'

'Very much so, indeed, sir.'

'Hah!' said I. 'I want nothing at present, Mr. Adams.'

Within a fortnight of that day I went to dine with a friend of mine, a merchant, a man of taste, who buys pictures and books; and the first man I saw among the company was Mr. Julius Slinkton. There he was, standing before the fire, with good large eyes and an open expression of face; but still (I thought) requiring everybody to come at him by the prepared way he offered, and by no other.

I noticed him ask my friend to introduce him to Mr. Sampson, and my friend did so. Mr. Slinkton was very happy to see me. Not too happy; there was no overdoing of the matter; happy in a thoroughly well-bred, perfectly unmeaning way.

'I thought you had met,' our host observed.

'No,' said Mr. Slinkton. 'I did look in at Mr. Sampson's office, on your recommendation; but I really did not feel justified in troubling Mr. Sampson himself, on a point in the everyday routine of an ordinary clerk.'

I said I should have been glad to show him any attention on our friend's introduction.

'I am sure of that,' said he, 'and am much obliged. At another time, perhaps, I may be less delicate. Only, however, if I have real business; for I know, Mr. Sampson, how precious business time is, and what a vast number of impertinent people there are in the world.'

I acknowledged his consideration with a slight bow. 'You were thinking,' said I, 'of effecting a policy on your life.'

'O dear no! I am afraid I am not so prudent as you pay me the compliment of supposing me to be, Mr. Sampson. I merely inquired for a friend. But you know what friends are in such matters. Nothing may ever come of it. I have the greatest reluctance to trouble men of business with inquiries for friends, knowing the probabilities to be a thousand to one that the friends will never follow them up. People are so fickle, so selfish, so inconsiderate. Don't you, in your business, find them so every day, Mr. Sampson?'

I was going to give a qualified answer; but he turned his

smooth, white parting on me with its 'Straight up here, if you please!' and I answered 'Yes.'

'I hear, Mr. Sampson,' he resumed presently, for our friend had a new cook, and dinner was not so punctual as usual, 'that your profession has recently suffered a great loss.'

'In money?' said I.

He laughed at my ready association of loss with money, and replied, 'No, in talent and vigour.'

Not at once following out his allusion, I considered for a moment. '*Has* it sustained a loss of that kind?' said I. 'I was not aware of it.'

'Understand me, Mr. Sampson. I don't imagine that you have retired. It is not so bad as that. But Mr. Meltham—'

'O, to be sure!' said I. 'Yes! Mr. Meltham, the young actuary of the "Inestimable."'

'Just so,' he returned in a consoling way.

'He is a great loss. He was at once the most profound, the most original, and the most energetic man I have ever known connected with Life Assurance.'

I spoke strongly; for I had a high esteem and admiration for Meltham; and my gentleman had indefinitely conveyed to me some suspicion that he wanted to sneer at him. He recalled me to my guard by presenting that trim pathway up his head, with its infernal 'Not on the grass, if you please—the gravel.'

'You knew him, Mr. Slinkton.'

'Only by reputation. To have known him as an acquaintance, or as a friend, is an honour I should have sought if he had remained in society, though I might never have had the good fortune to attain it, being a man of far inferior mark. He was scarcely above thirty, I suppose?'

'About thirty.'

'Ah!' he sighed in his former consoling way. 'What creatures we are! To break up, Mr. Sampson, and become incapable of business at that time of life!—Any reason assigned for the melancholy fact?'

('Humph!' thought I, as I looked at him. 'But I WON'T go up the track, and I WILL go on the grass.')

'What reason have you heard assigned, Mr. Slinkton?' I asked, point-blank.

'Most likely a false one. You know what Rumour is, Mr. Sampson. I never repeat what I hear; it is the only way of paring the nails and shaving the head of Rumour. But when *you* ask me what reason I have heard assigned for Mr. Meltham's passing away from among men, it is another thing. I am not gratifying idle gossip then. I was told, Mr. Sampson, that Mr. Meltham had relinquished all his avocations and all his prospects, because he was, in fact, broken-hearted. A disappointed attachment I heard,—though it hardly seems probable, in the case of a man so distinguished and so attractive.'

'Attractions and distinctions are no armour against death,' said I.

'O, she died? Pray pardon me. I did not hear that. That, indeed, makes it very, very sad. Poor Mr. Meltham! She died? Ah, dear me! Lamentable, lamentable!'

I still thought his pity was not quite genuine, and I still suspected an unaccountable sneer under all this, until he said, as we were parted, like the other knots of talkers, by the announcement of dinner:

'Mr. Sampson, you are surprised to see me so moved on behalf of a man whom I have never known. I am not so disinterested as you may suppose. I have suffered, and recently too, from death myself. I have lost one of two charming nieces, who were my constant companions. She died young—barely three-and-twenty; and even her remaining sister is far from strong. The world is a grave!'

He said this with deep feeling, and I felt reproached for the coldness of my manner. Coldness and distrust had been engendered in me, I knew, by my bad experiences; they were not natural to me; and I often thought how much I had lost in life, losing trustfulness, and how little I had gained, gaining hard caution. This state of mind being habitual to me, I troubled myself more about this conversation than I might have troubled myself about a greater matter. I listened to his talk at dinner, and observed how readily other men responded to it, and with what a graceful instinct he adapted his subjects to the knowledge and habits of

those he talked with. As, in talking with me, he had easily started the subject I might be supposed to understand best, and to be the most interested in, so, in talking with others, he guided himself by the same rule. The company was of a varied character; but he was not at fault, that I could discover, with any member of it. He knew just as much of each man's pursuit as made him agreeable to that man in reference to it, and just as little as made it natural in him to seek modestly for information when the theme was broached.

As he talked and talked—but really not too much, for the rest of us seemed to force it upon him—I became quite angry with myself. I took his face to pieces in my mind, like a watch, and examined it in detail. I could not say much against any of his features separately; I could say even less against them when they were put together. 'Then is it not monstrous,' I asked myself, 'that because a man happens to part his hair straight up the middle of his head, I should permit myself to suspect, and even to detest him?'

(I may stop to remark that this was no proof of my sense. An observer of men who finds himself steadily repelled by some apparently trifling thing in a stranger is right to give it great weight. It may be the clue to the whole mystery. A hair or two will show where a lion is hidden. A very little key will open a very heavy door.)

I took my part in the conversation with him after a time, and we got on remarkably well. In the drawing-room I asked the host how long he had known Mr. Slinkton. He answered, not many months; he had met him at the house of a celebrated painter then present, who had known him well when he was travelling with his nieces in Italy for their health. His plans in life being broken by the death of one of them, he was reading with the intention of going back to college as a matter of form, taking his degree, and going into orders. I could not but argue with myself that here was the true explanation of his interest in poor Meltham, and that I had been almost brutal in my distrust on that simple head.

III

On the very next day but one I was sitting behind my glass partition, as before, when he came into the outer office, as before. The moment I saw him again without hearing him, I hated him worse than ever.

It was only for a moment that I had this opportunity; for he waved his tight-fitting black glove the instant I looked at him, and came straght in.

'Mr. Sampson, good-day! I presume, you see, upon your kind permission to intrude upon you. I don't keep my word in being justified by business, for my business here—if I may so abuse the word—is of the slightest nature.'

I asked, was it anything I could assist him in?

'I thank you, no. I merely called to inquire outside whether my dilatory friend had been so false to himself as to be practical and sensible. But, of course, he has done nothing. I gave him your papers with my own hand, and he was hot upon the intention, but of course he has done nothing. Apart from the general human disinclination to do anything that ought to be done, I dare say there is a specialty about assuring one's life. You find it like will-making. People are so superstitious, and take it for granted they will die soon afterwards.'

'Up here, if you please; straight up here, Mr. Sampson. Neither to the right nor to the left.' I almost fancied I could hear him breathe the words as he sat smiling at me, with that intolerable parting exactly opposite the bridge of my nose.

'There is such a feeling sometimes, no doubt,' I replied; 'but I don't think it obtains to any great extent.'

'Well,' said he, with a shrug and a smile, 'I wish some good angel would influence my friend in the right direction. I rashly promised his mother and sister in Norfolk to see it done, and he promised them that he would do it. But I suppose he never will.'

He spoke for a minute or two on indifferent topics, and went away.

I had scarcely unlocked the drawers of my writing-table next morning, when he reappeared. I noticed that he came straight to

the door in the glass partition, and did not pause a single moment outside.

'Can you spare me two minutes, my dear Mr. Sampson?'

'By all means.'

'Much obliged,' laying his hat and umbrella on the table; 'I came early, not to interrupt you. The fact is, I am taken by surprise in reference to this proposal my friend has made.'

'Has he made one?' said I.

'Ye-es,' he answered, deliberately looking at me; and then a bright idea seemed to strike him—'or he only tells me he has. Perhaps that may be a new way of evading the matter. By Jupiter, I never thought of that!'

Mr. Adams was opening the morning's letters in the outer office. 'What is the name, Mr. Slinkton?' I asked.

'Beckwith.'

I looked out at the door and requested Mr. Adams, if there were a proposal in that name, to bring it in. He had already laid it out of his hand on the counter. It was easily selected from the rest, and he gave it me. Alfred Beckwith. Proposal to effect a policy with us for two thousand pounds. Dated yesterday.

'From the Middle Temple, I see, Mr. Slinkton.'

'Yes. He lives on the same staircase with me; his door is opposite. I never thought he would make me his reference though.'

'It seems natural enough that he should.'

'Quite so, Mr. Sampson; but I never thought of it. Let me see.' He took the printed paper from his pocket. 'How am I to answer all these questions?'

'According to the truth, of course,' said I.

'O, of course!' he answered, looking up from the paper with a smile; 'I meant they were so many. But you do right to be particular. It stands to reason that you must be particular. Will you allow me to use your pen and ink?'

'Certainly.'

'And your desk?'

'Certainly.'

He had been hovering about between his hat and his umbrella for a place to write on. He now sat down in my chair, at my blotting-paper and inkstand, with the long walk up his head in

accurate perspective before me, as I stood with my back to the fire.

Before answering each question he ran over it aloud, and discussed it. How long had he known Mr. Alfred Beckwith? That he had to calculate by years upon his fingers. What were his habits? No difficulty about them; temperate in the last degree, and took a little too much exercise, if anything. All the answers were satisfactory. When he had written them all, he looked them over, and finally signed them in a very pretty hand. He supposed he had now done with the business. I told him he was not likely to be troubled any farther. Should he leave the papers there? If he pleased. Much obliged. Good-morning.

I had had one other visitor before him; not at the office, but at my own house. That visitor had come to my bedside when it was not yet daylight, and had been seen by no one else but by my faithful confidential servant.

A second reference paper (for we required always two) was sent down into Norfolk, and was duly received back by post. This, likewise, was satisfactorily answered in every respect. Our forms were all complied with; we accepted the proposal, and the premium for one year was paid.

IV

For six or seven months I saw no more of Mr. Slinkton. He called once at my house, but I was not at home; and he once asked me to dine with him in the Temple, but I was engaged. His friend's assurance was effected in March. Late in September or early in October I was down at Scarborough for a breath of sea-air, where I met him on the beach. It was a hot evening; he came toward me with his hat in his hand; and there was the walk I had felt so strongly disinclined to take in perfect order again, exactly in front of the bridge of my nose.

He was not alone, but had a young lady on his arm.

She was dressed in mourning, and I looked at her with great interest. She had the appearance of being extremely delicate, and her face was remarkably pale and melancholy; but she was very pretty. He introduced her as his niece, Miss Niner.

'Are you strolling, Mr. Sampson? Is it possible you can be idle?'

It *was* possible, and I *was* strolling.

'Shall we stroll together?'

'With pleasure.'

The young lady walked between us, and we walked on the cool sea sand, in the direction of Filey.

'There have been wheels here,' said Mr. Slinkton. 'And now I look again, the wheels of a hand-carriage! Margaret, my love, your shadow without doubt!'

'Miss Niner's shadow?' I repeated, looking down at it on the sand.

'Not that one,' Mr. Slinkton returned, laughing. 'Margaret, my dear, tell Mr. Sampson.'

'Indeed,' said the young lady, turning to me, 'there is nothing to tell—except that I constantly see the same invalid old gentleman at all times, wherever I go. I have mentioned it to my uncle, and he calls the gentleman my shadow.'

'Does he live in Scarborough?' I asked.

'He is staying here.'

'Do you live in Scarborough?'

'No, I am staying here. My uncle has placed me with a family here, for my health.'

'And your shadow?' said I, smiling.

'My shadow,' she answered, smiling too, 'is—like myself—not very robust, I fear; for I lose my shadow sometimes, as my shadow loses me at other times. We both seem liable to confinement to the house. I have not seen my shadow for days and days; but it does oddly happen, occasionally, that wherever I go, for many days together, this gentleman goes. We have come together in the most unfrequented nooks on this shore.'

'Is this he?' said I, pointing before us.

The wheels had swept down to the water's edge, and described a great loop on the sand in turning. Bringing the loop back towards us, and spinning it out as it came, was a hand-carriage, drawn by a man.

'Yes,' said Miss Niner, 'this really is my shadow, uncle.'

As the carriage approached us and we approached the carriage,

I saw within it an old man, whose head was sunk on his breast, and who was enveloped in a variety of wrappers. He was drawn by a very quiet but very keen-looking man, with iron-grey hair, who was slightly lame. They had passed us, when the carriage stopped, and the old gentleman within, putting out his arm, called to me by my name. I went back, and was absent from Mr. Slinkton and his niece for about five minutes.

When I rejoined them, Mr. Slinkton was the first to speak. Indeed, he said to me in a raised voice before I came up with him:

'It is well you have not been longer, or my niece might have died of curiosity to know who her shadow is, Mr. Sampson.'

'An old East India Director,' said I. 'An intimate friend of our friend's, at whose house I first had the pleasure of meeting you. A certain Major Banks. You have heard of him?'

'Never.'

'Very rich, Miss Niner; but very old, and very crippled. An amiable man, sensible—much interested in you. He has just been expatiating on the affection that he has observed to exist between you and your uncle.'

Mr. Slinkton was holding his hat again, and he passed his hand up the straight walk, as if he himself went up it serenely, after me.

'Mr. Sampson,' he said, tenderly pressing his niece's arm in his, 'our affection was always a strong one, for we have had but few near ties. We have still fewer now. We have associations to bring us together, that are not of this world, Margaret.'

'Dear uncle!' murmured the young lady, and turned her face aside to hide her tears.

'My niece and I have such remembrances and regrets in common, Mr. Sampson,' he feelingly pursued, 'that it would be strange indeed if the relations between us were cold or indifferent. If I remember a conversation we once had together, you will understand the reference I make. Cheer up, dear Margaret. Don't droop, don't droop. My Margaret! I cannot bear to see you droop!'

The poor young lady was very much affected, but controlled herself. His feelings, too, were very acute. In a word, he found himself under such great need of a restorative, that he presently

went way, to take a bath of sea-water, leaving the young lady and me sitting by a point of rock, and probably presuming—but that you will say was a pardonable indulgence in a luxury—that she would praise him with all her heart.

She did, poor thing! With all her confiding heart, she praised him to me, for his care of her dead sister, and for his untiring devotion in her last illness. The sister had wasted away very slowly, and wild and terrible fantasies had come over her toward the end, but he had never been impatient with her, or at a loss; had always been gentle, watchful, and self-possessed. The sister had known him, as she had known him, to be the best of men, the kindest of men, and yet a man of such admirable strength of character, as to be a very tower for the support of their weak natures while their poor lives endured.

'I shall leave him, Mr. Sampson, very soon,' said the young lady; 'I know my life is drawing to an end; and when I am gone. I hope he will marry and be happy. I am sure he has lived single so long, only for my sake, and for my poor, poor sister's.'

The little hand-carriage had made another great loop on the damp sand, and was coming back again, gradually spinning out a slim figure of eight, half a mile long.

'Young lady,' said I, looking around, laying my hand upon her arm, and speaking in a low voice, 'time presses. You hear the gentle murmur of that sea?'

She looked at me with the utmost wonder and alarm, saying 'Yes!'

'And you know what a voice is in it when the storm comes?'

'Yes!'

'You see how quiet and peaceful it lies before us, and you know what an awful sight of power without pity it might be, this very night!'

'Yes!'

'But if you had never heard or seen it, or heard of it in its cruelty, could you believe that it beats every inanimate thing in its way to pieces, without mercy, and destroys life without remorse?'

'You terrify me, sir, by these questions!'

'To save you, young lady, to save you! For God's sake, col-

lect your strength and collect your firmness! If you were here alone, and hemmed in by the rising tide on the flow to fifty feet above your head, you could not be in greater danger than the danger you are now to be saved from.'

The figure on the sand was spun out, and straggled off into a crooked little jerk that ended at the cliff very near us.

'As I am, before Heaven and the Judge of all mankind, your friend, and your dead sister's friend, I solemnly entreat you, Miss Niner, without one moment's loss of time, to come to this gentleman with me!'

If the little carriage had been less near to us, I doubt if I could have got her away; but it was so near that we were there before she had recovered the hurry of being urged from the rock. I did not remain there with her two minutes. Certainly within five, I had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing her—from the point we sat on, and to which I had returned—half supported and half carried up some rude steps notched in the cliff, by the figure of an active man. With that figure beside her, I knew she was safe anywhere.

I sat alone on the rock, awaiting Mr. Slinkton's return. The twilight was deepening and the shadows were heavy, when he came round the point, with his hat hanging at his button-hole, smoothing his wet hair with one of his hands, and picking out the old path with the other and a pocket-comb.

'My niece not here, Mr. Sampson?' he said, looking about.

'Miss Niner seemed to feel a chill in the air after the sun was down, and has gone home.'

He looked surprised, as though she were not accustomed to do anything without him; even to originate so slight a proceeding.

'I persuaded Miss Niner,' I explained.

'Ah!' said he. 'She is easily persuaded—for her good. Thank you, Mr. Sampson; she is better within doors. The bathing-place was farther than I thought, to say the truth.'

'Miss Niner is very delicate,' I observed.

He shook his head and drew a deep sigh. 'Very, very, very. You may recollect my saying so. The time that has since intervened has not strengthened her. The gloomy shadow that fell upon her sister so early in life seems, in my anxious eyes, to gather

over her, ever darker, ever darker. Dear Margaret, dear Margaret! But we must hope.'

The hand-carriage was spinning away before us at a most indecorous pace for an invalid vehicle, and was making most irregular curves upon the sand. Mr. Slinkton, noticing it after he had put his handkerchief to his eyes, said:

'If I may judge from appearances, your friend will be upset, Mr. Sampson.'

'It looks probable, certainly,' said I.

'The servant must be drunk.'

'The servants of old gentlemen will get drunk sometimes,' said I.

'The major draws very light, Mr. Sampson.'

'The major does draw light,' said I.

By this time the carriage, much to my relief, was lost in the darkness. We walked on for a little, side by side over the sand, in silence. After a short while he said, in a voice still affected by the emotion that his niece's state of health had awakened in him,

'Do you stay here long, Mr. Sampson?'

'Why, no. I am going away to-night.'

'So soon? But business always holds you in request. Men like Mr. Sampson are too important to others, to be spared to their own need of relaxation and enjoyment.'

'I don't know about that,' said I. 'However, I am going back.'

'To London?'

'To London.'

'I shall be there too, soon after you.'

I knew that as well as he did. But I did not tell him so. Any more than I told him what defensive weapon my right hand rested on in my pocket, as I walked by his side. Any more than I told him why I did not walk on the sea side of him with the night closing in.

We left the beach, and our ways diverged. We exchanged good-night, and had parted indeed, when he said, returning,

'Mr. Sampson, *may* I ask? Poor Meltham, whom we spoke of, —dead yet?'

'Not when I last heard of him; but too broken a man to live long, and hopelessly lost to his old calling.'

'Dear, dear, dear!' said he, with great feeling. 'Sad, sad, sad! The world is a grave!' And so went his way.

It was not his fault if the world were not a grave; but I did not call that observation after him, any more than I had mentioned those other things just now enumerated. He went his way, and I went mine with all expedition. This happened, as I have said, either at the end of September or beginning of October. The next time I saw him, and the last time, was late in November.

V

I HAD a very particular engagement to breakfast in the Temple. It was a bitter north-easterly morning, and the sleet and slush lay inches deep in the streets. I could get no conveyance, and was soon wet to the knees; but I should have been true to that appointment, though I had to wade to it up to my neck in the same impediments.

The appointment took me to some chambers in the Temple. They were at the top of a lonely corner house overlooking the river. The name, MR. ALFRED BECKWITH, was painted on the outer door. On the door opposite, on the same landing, the name MR. JULIUS SLINKTON. The doors of both sets of chambers stood open, so that anything said aloud in one set could be heard in the other.

I had never been in those chambers before. They were dismal, close, unwholesome, and oppressive; the furniture, originally good, and not yet old, was faded and dirty,—the rooms were in great disorder; there was a strong prevailing smell of opium, brandy, and tobacco; the grate and fire-irons were splashed all over with unsightly blotches of rust; and on a sofa by the fire, in the room where breakfast had been prepared, lay the host, Mr. Beckwith, a man with all the appearances of the worst kind of drunkard, very far advanced upon his shameful way to death.

'Slinkton is not come yet,' said this creature, staggering up when I went in; 'I 'll call him.—Halloa! Julius Cæsar! Come and drink!' As he hoarsely roared this out, he beat the poker and tongs together in a mad way, as if that were his usual manner of summoning his associate.

The voice of Mr. Slinkton was heard through the clatter from the opposite side of the staircase, and he came in. He had not expected the pleasure of meeting me. I have seen several artful men brought to a stand, but I never saw a man so aghast as he was when his eyes rested on mine.

'Julius Cæsar,' cried Beckwith, staggering between us, 'Mist' Sampson! Mist' Sampson, Julius Cæsar! Julius, Mist' Sampson, is the friend of my soul. Julius keeps me plied with liquor, morning, noon, and night. Julius is a real benefactor. Julius threw the tea and coffee out of window when I used to have any. Julius empties all the water-jugs of their contents, and fills 'em with spirits. Julius winds me up and keeps me going.—Boil the brandy, Julius!'

There was a rusty and furred saucepan in the ashes,—the ashes looked like the accumulation of weeks,—and Beckwith, rolling and staggering between us as if he were going to plunge headlong into the fire, got the saucepan out, and tried to force it into Slinkton's hand.

'Boil the brandy, Julius Cæsar! Come! Do your usual office. Boil the brandy!'

He became so fierce in his gesticulations with the saucepan, that I expected to see him lay open Slinkton's head with it. I therefore put out my hand to check him. He reeled back to the sofa, and sat there panting, shaking, and red-eyed, in his rags of dressing-gown, looking at us both. I noticed then that there was nothing to drink on the table but brandy, and nothing to eat but salted herrings, and a hot, sickly, highly-peppered stew.

'At all events, Mr. Sampson,' said Slinkton, offering me the smooth gravel path for the last time, 'I thank you for interfering between me and this unfortunate man's violence. However you came here, Mr. Sampson, or with whatever motive you came here, at least I thank you for that.'

'Boil the brandy,' muttered Beckwith.

Without gratifying his desire to know how I came there, I said, quietly, 'How is your niece, Mr. Slinkton?'

He looked hard at me, and I looked hard at him.

'I am sorry to say, Mr. Sampson, that my niece has proved treacherous and ungrateful to her best friend. She left me without

a word of notice or explanation. She was misled, no doubt, by some designing rascal. Perhaps you may have heard of it?'

'I did hear that she was misled by a designing rascal. In fact, I have proof of it.'

'Are you sure of that?' said he.

'Quite.'

'Boil the brandy,' muttered Beckwith. 'Company to breakfast, Julius Cæsar. Do your usual office,—provide the usual breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper. Boil the brandy!'

The eyes of Slinkton looked from him to me, and he said, after a moment's consideration,

'Mr. Sampson, you are a man of the world, and so am I. I will be plain with you.'

'O no, you won't,' said I, shaking my head.

'I tell you, sir, I will be plain with you.'

'And I tell you you will not,' said I. 'I know all about you *You* plain with any one? Nonsense, nonsense!'

'I plainly tell you, Mr. Sampson,' he went on, with a manner almost composed, 'that I understand your object. You want to save your funds, and escape from your liabilities; these are old tricks of trade with you Office-gentlemen. But you will not do it, sir; you will not succeed. You have not an easy adversary to play against, when you play against me. We shall have to inquire, in due time, when and how Mr. Beckwith fell into his present habits With that remark, sir, I put this poor creature, and his incoherent wanderings of speech, aside, and wish you a good morning and a better case next time.'

While he was saying this, Beckwith had filled a half-pint glass with brandy. At this moment, he threw the brandy at his face, and threw the glass after it. Slinkton put his hands up, half blinded with the spirit, and cut with the glass across the forehead. At the sound of the breakage, a fourth person came into the room, closed the door, and stood at it; he was a very quiet but very keen-looking man, with iron-gray hair, and slightly lame.

Slinkton pulled out his handkerchief, assuaged the pain in his smarting eyes, and dabbled the blood on his forehead. He was a long time about it, and I saw that in the doing of it, a tremendous change came over him, occasioned by the change in Beckwith,—

who ceased to pant and tremble, sat upright, and never took his eyes off him. I never in my life saw a face in which abhorrence and determination were so forcibly painted as in Beckwith's then.

'Look at me, you villain,' said Beckwith, 'and see me as I really am. I took these rooms, to make them a trap for you. I came into them as a drunkard, to bait the trap for you. You fell into the trap, and you will never leave it alive. On the morning when you last went to Mr. Sampson's office, I had seen him first. Your plot has been known to both of us, all along, and you have been counterplotted all along. What? Having been cajoled into putting that prize of two thousand pounds in your power, I was to be done to death with brandy, and, brandy not proving quick enough, with something quicker? Have I never seen you, when you thought my senses gone, pouring from your little bottle into my glass? Why, you Murderer and Forger, alone here with you in the dead of night, as I have so often been, I have had my hand upon the trigger of a pistol, twenty times, to blow your brains out!'

This sudden starting up of the thing that he had supposed to be his imbecile victim into a determined man, with a settled resolution to hunt him down and be the death of him, mercilessly expressed from head to foot, was, in the first shock, too much for him. Without any figure of speech, he staggered under it. But there is no greater mistake than to suppose that a man who is a calculating criminal, is, in any phase of his guilt, otherwise than true to himself, and perfectly consistent with his whole character. Such a man commits murder, and murder is the natural culmination of his course; such a man has to outface murder, and will do it with hardihood and effrontery. It is a sort of fashion to express surprise that any notorious criminal, having such crime upon his conscience, can so brave it out. Do you think that if he had it on his conscience at all, or had a conscience to have it upon, he would ever have committed the crime?

Perfectly consistent with himself, as I believe all such monsters to be, this Slinkton recovered himself, and showed a defiance that was sufficiently cold and quiet. He was white, he was haggard, he was changed; but only as a sharper who had played for a great stake and had been outwitted and had lost the game.

'Listen to me, you villain,' said Beckwith, 'and let every word

you hear me say be a stab in your wicked heart. When I took these rooms, to throw myself in your way and lead you on to the scheme that I knew my appearance and supposed character and habits would suggest to such a devil, how did I know that? Because you were no stranger to me. I knew you well. And I knew you to be the cruel wretch who, for so much money, had killed one innocent girl while she trusted him implicitly, and who was by inches killing another.'

Slinkton took out a snuff-box, took a pinch of snuff, and laughed.

'But see here,' said Beckwith, never looking away, never raising his voice, never relaxing his face, never unclenching his hand. 'See what a dull wolf you have been, after all! The infatuated drunkard who never drank a fiftieth part of the liquor you plied him with, but poured it away, here, there, everywhere—almost before your eyes; who bought over the fellow you set to watch him and to ply him, by out-bidding you in his bribe, before he had been at his work three days—with whom you have observed no caution, yet who was so bent on ridding the earth of you as a wild beast, that he would have defeated you if you had been ever so prudent—that drunkard whom you have, many a time, left on the floor of this room, and who has even let you go out of it, alive and undeceived, when you have turned him over with your foot—has, almost as often, on the same night, within an hour, within a few minutes, watched you awake, had his hand at your pillow when you were asleep, turned over your papers, taken samples from your bottles and packets of powder, changed their contents, rifled every secret of your life!'

He had had another pinch of snuff in his hand, but had gradually let it drop from between his fingers to the floor; where he now smoothed it out with his foot, looking down at it the while.

'That drunkard,' said Beckwith, 'who had free access to your rooms at all times, that he might drink the strong drinks that you left in his way and be the sooner ended, holding no more terms with you than he would hold with a tiger, has had his master-key for all your locks, his test for all your poisons, his clue to your cipher-writing. He can tell you, as well as you can tell him, how long it took to complete that deed, what doses there were,

what intervals, what signs of gradual decay upon mind and body; what distempered fancies were produced, what observable changes, what physical pain. He can tell you as well as you can tell him, that all this was recorded day by day, as a lesson of experience for future service. He can tell you, better than you can tell him, where that journal is at this moment.'

Slinkton stopped the action of his foot, and looked at Beckwith.

'No,' said the latter, as if answering a question from him. 'Not in the drawer of the writing-desk that opens with a spring; it is not there, and it never will be there again.'

'Then you are a thief,' said Slinkton.

Without any change whatever in the inflexible purpose, which it was quite terrific even to me to contemplate, and from the power of which I had always felt convinced it was impossible for this wretch to escape, Beckwith returned.

'And I am your niece's shadow, too.'

With an imprecation Slinkton put his hand to his head, tore out some hair, and flung it to the ground. It was the end of the smooth walk; he destroyed it in the action, and it will soon be seen that his use for it was past.

Beckwith went on: 'Whenever you left here, I left here. Although I understood that you found it necessary to pause in the completion of that purpose, to avert suspicion, still I watched you close, with the poor confiding girl. When I had the diary, and could read it word by word,—it was only about the night before your last visit to Scarborough,—you remember the night? you slept with a small flat vial tied to your wrist,—I sent to Mr. Sampson, who was kept out of view. This is Mr. Sampson's trusty servant standing by the door. We three saved your niece among us.'

Slinkton looked at us all, took an uncertain step or two from the place where he had stood, returned to it, and glanced about him in a very curious way,—as one of the meaner reptiles might, looking for a hole to hide in. I noticed at the same time, that a singular change took place in the figure of the man,—as if it collapsed within his clothes, and they consequently became ill-shapen and ill-fitting.

'You shall know,' said Beckwith, 'for I hope the knowledge will be bitter and terrible to you, why you have been pursued by one man, and why, when the whole interest that Mr. Sampson represents would have expended any money in hunting you down, you have been tracked to death at a single individual's charge. I hear you have had the name of Meltham on your lips sometimes?' I saw, in addition to those other changes, a sudden stoppage come upon his breathing.

'When you sent the sweet girl whom you murdered (you know with what artfully made-out surroundings and probabilities you sent her) to Meltham's office, before taking her abroad to originate the transaction that doomed her to the grave, it fell to Meltham's lot to see her and to speak with her. It did not fall to his lot to save her, though I know he would freely give his own life to have done it. He admired her;—I would say he loved her deeply, if I thought it possible that you could understand the word. When she was sacrificed, he was thoroughly assured of your guilt. Having lost her, he had but one object left in life, and that was to avenge her and destroy you.'

I saw the villain's nostrils rise and fall convulsively; but I saw no moving at his mouth.

'That man Meltham,' Beckwith steadily pursued, 'was as absolutely certain that you could never elude him in this world, if he devoted himself to your destruction with his utmost fidelity and earnestness, and if he divided the sacred duty with no other duty in life, as he was certain that in achieving it he would be a poor instrument in the hands of Providence, and would do well before Heaven in striking you out from among living men. I am that man, and I thank God that I have done my work!'

If Slinkton had been running for his life from swift-footed savages, a dozen miles, he could not have shown more emphatic signs of being oppressed at heart and labouring for breath, than he showed now, when he looked at the pursuer who had so relentlessly hunted him down.

'You never saw me under my right name before; you see me under my right name now. You shall see me once again in the body, when you are tried for your life. You shall see me once

again in the spirit, when the cord is round your neck, and the crowd are crying against you!'

When Meltham had spoken these last words, the miscreant suddenly turned away his face, and seemed to strike his mouth with his open hand. At the same instant, the room was filled with a new and powerful odour, and, almost at the same instant, he broke into a crooked run, leap, start,—I have no name for the spasm,—and fell, with a dull weight that shook the heavy old doors and windows in their frames.

That was the fitting end of him.

When we saw that he was dead, we drew away from the room, and Meltham, giving me his hand, said, with a weary air,

'I have no more work on earth, my friend. But I shall see her again elsewhere.'

It was in vain that I tried to rally him. He might have saved her, he said; he had not saved her, and he reproached himself; he had lost her, and he was broken-hearted.

'The purpose that sustained me is over, Sampson, and there is nothing now to hold me to life. I am not fit for life; I am weak and spiritless; I have no hope and no object; my day is done.'

In truth, I could hardly have believed that the broken man who then spoke to me was the man who had so strongly and so differently impressed me when his purpose was before him. I used such entreaties with him, as I could; but he still said, and always said, in a patient, undemonstrative way,—nothing could avail him,—he was broken-hearted.

He died early in the next spring. He was buried by the side of the poor young lady for whom he had cherished those tender and unhappy regrets; and he left all he had to her sister. She lived to be a happy wife and mother; she married my sister's son, who succeeded poor Meltham; she is living now, and her children ride about the garden on my walking-stick when I go to see her.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE

THE BATTLE OF LIFE

Part the First

Once upon a time, it matters little when, and in stalwart England, it matters little where, a fierce battle was fought. It was fought upon a long summer day when the waving grass was green. Many a wild flower formed by the Almighty Hand to be a perfumed goblet for the dew, felt its enamelled cup filled high with blood that day, and shrinking dropped. Many an insect deriving its delicate colour from harmless leaves and herbs, was stained anew that day by dying men, and marked its frightened way with an unnatural track. The painted butterfly took blood into the air upon the edges of its wings. The stream ran red. The trodden ground became a quagmire, whence, from sullen pools collected in the prints of human feet and horse's hoofs, the one prevailing hue still lowered and glimmered at the sun.

Heaven keep us from a knowledge of the sights the moon beheld upon that field, when, coming up above the black line of distant rising-ground, softened and blurred at the edge by trees, she rose into the sky and looked upon the plain, strewn with upturned faces that had once at mothers' breasts sought mothers' eyes, or slumbered happily. Heaven keep us from a knowledge of the secrets whispered afterwards upon the tainted wind that blew across the scene of that day's work and that night's death and suffering! Many a lonely moon was bright upon the battle-ground, and many a star kept mournful watch upon it, and many a wind from every quarter of the earth blew over it, before the traces of the fight were worn away.

They lurked and lingered for a long time, but survived in little things; for, Nature, far above the evil passions of men, soon re-

covered Her serenity, and smiled upon the guilty battle-ground as she had done before, when it was innocent. The larks sang high above it; the swallows skimmed and dipped and flitted to and fro; the shadows of the flying clouds pursued each other swiftly, over grass and corn and turnip-field and wood, and over roof and church-spire in the nestling town among the trees, away into the bright distance on the borders of the sky and earth, where the red sunsets faded. Crops were sown, and grew up, and were gathered in; the stream that had been crimsoned, turned a water-mill; men whistled at the plough; gleaners and haymakers were seen in quiet groups at work; sheep and oxen pastured; boys whooped and called, in fields, to scare away the birds; smoke rose from cottage chimneys; sabbath bells rang peacefully; old people lived and died; the timid creatures of the fields, and simple flowers of the bush and garden, grew and withered in their destined terms: and all upon the fierce and bloody battle-ground, where thousands upon thousands had been killed in the great fight.

But, there were deep green patches in the growing corn at first, that people looked at awfully. Year after year they re-appeared; and it was known that underneath those fertile spots, heaps of men and horses lay buried, indiscriminately, enriching the ground. The husbandmen who ploughed those places, shrunk from the great worms abounding there; and the sheaves they yielded, were, for many a long year, called the Battle Sheaves, and set apart; and no one ever knew a Battle Sheaf to be among the last load at a Harvest Home. For a long time, every furrow that was turned, revealed some fragments of the fight. For a long time, there were wounded trees upon the battle-ground; and scraps of hacked and broken fence and wall, where deadly struggles had been made; and trampled parts where not a leaf or blade would grow. For a long time, no village girl would dress her hair or bosom with the sweetest flower from that field of death: and after many a year had come and gone, the berries growing there, were still believed to leave too deep a stain upon the hand that plucked them.

The Seasons in their course, however, though they passed as lightly as the summer clouds themselves, obliterated, in the lapse of time, even these remains of the old conflict; and wore away

such legendary traces of it as the neighbouring people carried in their minds, until they dwindled into old wives' tales, dimly remembered round the winter fire, and waning every year. Where the wild flowers and berries had so long remained upon the stem untouched, gardens arose, and houses were built, and children played at battles on the turf. The wounded trees had long ago made Christmas logs, and blazed and roared away. The deep green patches were no greener now than the memory of those who lay in dust below. The plough-share still turned up from time to time some rusty bits of metal, but it was hard to say what use they had ever served, and those who found them wondered and disputed. An old dinted corslet, and a helmet, had been hanging in the church so long, that the same weak half-blind old man who tried in vain to make them out above the whitewashed arch, had marvelled at them as a baby. If the host slain upon the field could have been for a moment reanimated in the forms in which they fell each upon the spot that was the bed of his untimely death, gashed and ghastly soldiers would have stared in, hundreds deep, at household door and window; and would have risen on the hearths of quiet homes; and would have been the garnered store of barns and granaries; and would have started up between the cradled infant and its nurse; and would have floated with the stream, and whirled round on the mill, and crowded the orchard, and burdened the meadow, and piled the rickyard high with dying men. So altered was the battle-ground, where thousands upon thousands had been killed in the great fight.

Nowhere more altered, perhaps, about a hundred years ago, than in one little orchard attached to an old stone house with a honeysuckle porch; where, on a bright autumn morning, there were sounds of music and laughter, and where two girls danced merrily together on the grass, while some half-dozen peasant women standing on ladders, gathering the apples from the trees, stopped in their work to look down, and share their enjoyment. It was a pleasant, lively, natural scene; a beautiful day, a retired spot; and the two girls, quite unconstrained and careless, danced in the freedom and gaiety of their hearts.

If there were no such thing as display in the world, my private opinion is, and I hope you agree with me, that we might get on a

great deal better than we do, and might be infinitely more agreeable company than we are. It was charming to see how these girls danced. They had no spectators but the apple-pickers on the ladders. They were very glad to please them, but they danced to please themselves (or at least you would have supposed so); and you could no more help admiring, than they could help dancing. How they did dance!

Not like opera-dancers. Not at all. And not like Madame Anybody's finished pupils. Not the least. It was not quadrille dancing, nor minuet dancing, nor even country-dance dancing. It was neither in the old style, nor the new style, nor the French style, nor the English style: though it may have been, by accident, a trifle in the Spanish style, which is a free and joyous one, I am told, deriving a delightful air of off-hand inspiration, from the chirping little castanets. As they danced among the orchard trees, and down the groves of stems and back again, and twirled each other lightly round and round, the influence of their airy motion seemed to spread and spread, in the sun-lighted scene, like an expanding circle in the water. Their streaming hair and fluttering skirts, the elastic grass beneath their feet, the boughs that rustled in the morning air—the flashing leaves, the speckled shadows on the soft green ground—the balmy wind that swept along the landscape, glad to turn the distant windmill, cheerily—everything between the two girls, and the man and team at plough upon the ridge of land, where they showed against the sky as if they were the last things in the world—seemed dancing too.

At last, the younger of the dancing sisters, out of breath, and laughily gaily, threw herself upon a bench to rest. The other leaned again a tree hard by. The music, a wandering harp and fiddle, left off with a flourish, as if it boasted of its freshness; though the truth is, it had gone at such a pace, and worked itself to such a pitch of competition with the dancing, that it never could have held on, half a minute longer. The apple-pickers on the ladders raised a hum and murmur of applause, and then, in keeping with the sound, bestirred themselves to work again like bees.

The more actively, perhaps, because an elderly gentleman, who was no other than Doctor Jeddler himself—it was Doctor Jeddler's house and orchard, you should know, and these were Doctor

Jeddler's daughters—came bustling out to see what was the matter, and who the deuce played music on his property, before breakfast. For he was a great philosopher, Doctor Jeddler, and not very musical.

'Music and dancing *to-day!*' said the Doctor, stopping short, and speaking to himself, 'I thought they dreaded to-day. But it 's a world of contradictions. Why, Grace, why, Marion!' he added, aloud, 'is the world more mad than usual this morning?'

'Make some allowance for it, father, if it be,' replied his younger daughter, Marion, going close to him, and looking into his face, 'for it 's somebody's birthday.'

'Somebody's birth-day, Puss,' replied the Doctor. 'Don't you know it 's always somebody's birth-day? Did you never hear how many new performers enter on this—ha! ha! ha!—it 's impossible to speak gravely of it—on this preposterous and ridiculous business called Life, every minute?'

'No, father!'

'No, not you, of course; you 're a woman—almost,' said the Doctor. 'By the bye,' and he looked into the pretty face, still close to his, 'I suppose it 's *your* birth-day.'

'No! Do you really, father?' cried his pet daughter, pursing up her red lips to be kissed.

'There! Take my love with it,' said the Doctor, imprinting his upon them; 'and many happy returns of the—the idea!—of the day. The notion of wishing happy returns in such a farce as this,' said the Doctor to himself, 'is good! Ha! ha! ha!'

Doctor Jeddler was, as I have said, a great philosopher, and the heart and mystery of his philosophy was, to look upon the world as a gigantic practical joke; as something too absurd to be considered seriously, by any rational man. His system of belief had been, in the beginning, part and parcel of the battle-ground on which he lived, as you shall presently understand.

'Well! But how did you get the music?' asked the Doctor. 'Poultry-stealers, of course! Where did the minstrels come from?'

'Alfred sent the music,' said his daughter Grace, adjusting a few simple flowers in her sister's hair, with which, in her admiration of that youthful beauty, she had herself adorned it half an hour before, and which the dancing had disarranged.

'Oh! Alfred sent the music, did he?' returned the Doctor.

'Yes. He met it coming out of the town as he was entering early. The men are travelling on foot, and rested there last night; and as it was Marion's birthday, and he thought it would please her, he sent them on, with a pencilled note to me, saying that if I thought so too, they had come to serenade her.'

'Ay, ay,' said the Doctor, carelessly, 'he always takes your opinion.'

'And my opinion being favourable,' said Grace, good-humouredly; and pausing for a moment to admire the pretty head she decorated, with her own thrown back; 'and Marion being in high spirits, and beginning to dance, I joined her. And so we danced to Alfred's music till we were out of breath. And we thought the music all the gayer for being sent by Alfred. Didn't we, dear Marion?'

'Oh, I don't know, Grace. How you tease me about Alfred.'

'Tease you by mentioning your lover?' said her sister.

'I am sure I don't much care to have him mentioned,' said the wilful beauty, stripping the petals from some flowers she held, and scattering them on the ground. 'I am almost tired of hearing of him; and as to his being my lover—'

'Hush! Don't speak lightly of a true heart, which is all your own, Marion,' cried her sister, 'even in jest. There is not a truer heart than Alfred's in the world!'

'No—no, 'said Marion, raising her eyebrows with a pleasant air of careless consideration, 'perhaps not. But I don't know that there 's any great merit in that. I—I don't want him to be so very true. I never asked him. If he expects that I— But, dear Grace, why need we talk of him at all, just now!'

It was agreeable to see the graceful figures of the blooming sisters, twined together, lingering among the trees, conversing thus, with earnestness opposed to lightness, yet with love responding tenderly to love. And it was very curious indeed to see the younger sister's eyes suffused with tears, and something fervently and deeply felt, breaking through the wilfulness of what she said, and striving with it painfully.

The difference between them, in respect of age, could not exceed four years at most; but, Grace, as often happens in such

cases, when no mother watches over both (the Doctor's wife was dead), seemed, in her gentle care of her young sister, and in the steadiness of her devotion to her, older than she was; and more removed, in course of nature, from all competition with her, or participation, otherwise than through her sympathy and true affection, in her wayward fancies, than their ages seemed to warrant. Great character of mother, that, even in this shadow and faint reflection of it, purifies the heart, and raises the exalted nature nearer to the angels!

The Doctor's reflections, as he looked after them, and heard the purport of their discourse, were limited at first to certain merry meditations on the folly of all loves and likings, and the idle imposition practised on themselves by young people, who believed for a moment, that there could be anything serious in such bubbles, and were always undeceived—always!

But, the home-adorning, self-denying qualities of Grace, and her sweet temper, so gentle and retiring, yet including so much constancy and bravery of spirit, seemed all expressed to him in the contrast between her quiet household figure and that of his younger and more beautiful child; and he was sorry for her sake—sorry for them both—that life should be such a very ridiculous business as it was.

The Doctor never dreamed of inquiring whether his children, or either of them, helped in any way to make the scheme a serious one. But then he was a Philosopher.

A kind and generous man by nature, he had stumbled, by chance, over that common Philosopher's stone (much more easily discovered than the object of the alchemist's researches), which sometimes trips up kind and generous men, and has the fatal property of turning gold to dross and every precious thing to poor account.

'Britain!' cried the Doctor. 'Britain! Halloa!'

A small man, with an uncommonly sour and discontented face, emerged from the house, and returned to this call the unceremonious acknowledgment of 'Now then!'

'Where 's the breakfast table?' said the Doctor.

'In the house,' returned Britain.

'Are you going to spread it out here, as you were told last

night?' said the doctor. 'Don't you know that there are gentlemen coming? That there 's business to be done this morning, before the coach comes by? That this is a very particular occasion?'

'I couldn't do anything, Dr. Jeddler, till the women had done getting in the apples, could I?' said Britain, his voice rising with his reasoning, so that it was very loud at last.

'Well, have they done now?' replied the Doctor, looking at his watch, and clapping his hands. 'Come! make haste! Where 's Clemency?'

'Here am I, Mister,' said a voice from one of the ladders, which a pair of clumsy feet descended briskly. 'It 's all done now. Clear away, gals. Everything shall be ready for you in half a minute, Mister.'

With that she began to bustle about most vigorously; presenting, as she did so, an appearance sufficiently peculiar to justify a word of introduction.

She was about thirty years old, and had a sufficiently plump and cheerful face, though it was twisted up into an odd expression of tightness that made it comical. But, the extraordinary homeliness of her gait and manner, would have superseded any face in the world. To say that she had two left legs, and somebody else's arms, and that all four limbs seemed to be out of joint, and to start from perfectly wrong places when they were set in motion, is to offer the mildest outline of the reality. To say that she was perfectly content and satisfied with these arrangements, and regarded them as being no business of hers, and that she took her arms and legs as they came, and allowed them to dispose of themselves just as it happened, is to render faint justice to her equanimity. Her dress was a prodigious pair of self-willed shoes, that never wanted to go where her feet went; blue stockings; a printed gown of many colours, and the most hideous pattern procurable for money; and a white apron. She always wore short sleeves, and always had, by some accident, grazed elbows, in which she took so lively an interest, that she was continually trying to turn them round and get impossible views of them. In general, a little cap placed somewhere on her head; though it was rarely to be met with in the place usually occupied in other subjects, by that

article of dress; but, from head to foot she was scrupulously clean, and maintained a kind of dislocated tidiness. Indeed, her laudable anxiety to be tidy and compact in her own conscience as well as in the public eye, gave rise to one of her most startling evolutions, which was to grasp herself sometimes by a sort of wooden handle (part of her clothing, and familiarly called a busk), and wrestle as it were with her garments, until they fell into a symmetrical arrangement.

Such, in outward form and garb, was Clemency Newcome; who was supposed to have unconsciously originated a corruption of her own Christian name, from Clementina (but nobody knew, for the deaf old mother, a very phenomenon of age, whom she had supported almost from a child, was dead, and she had no other relation); who now busied herself in preparing the table, and who stood, at intervals, with her bare red arms crossed, rubbing her grazed elbows with opposite hands, and staring at it very composedly, until she suddenly remembered something else she wanted, and jogged off to fetch it.

'Here are them two lawyers a-coming, Mister!' said Clemency, in a tone of no very great good-will.

'Aha!' cried the Doctor, advancing to the gate to meet them. 'Good-morning, good-morning! Grace, my dear! Marion! Here are Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs. Where 's Alfred!'

'He 'll be back directly, father, no doubt,' said Grace. 'He had so much to do this morning in his preparations for departure, that he was up and out by daybreak. Good-morning, gentlemen.'

'Ladies!' said Mr. Snitchey, 'for Self and Craggs,' who bowed, 'good-morning! Miss,' to Marion, 'I kiss your hand.' Which he did. 'And I wish you'—which he might or might not, for he didn't look, at first sight, like a gentleman troubled with many warm outpourings of soul, in behalf of other people, 'a hundred happy returns of this auspicious day.'

'Ha ha ha!' laughed the Doctor thoughtfully, with his hands in his pockets. 'The great farce in a hundred acts!'

'You wouldn't, I am sure,' said Mr. Snitchey, standing a small professional blue bag against one leg of the table, 'cut the great farce short for this actress, at all events, Doctor Jeddler.'

'No,' returned the Doctor. 'God forbid! May she live to laugh

at it, as long as she *can* laugh, and then say, with the French wit, "The farce is ended; draw the curtain."'

'The French wit,' said Mr. Snitchey, peeping sharply into his blue bag, 'was wrong, Doctor Jeddler, and your philosophy is altogether wrong, depend upon it, as I have often told you. Nothing serious in life! What do you call law?'

'A joke,' replied the Doctor.

'Did you ever go to law?' asked Mr. Snitchey, looking out of the blue bag.

'Never,' returned the Doctor.

'If you ever do,' said Mr. Snitchey, 'perhaps you 'll alter that opinion.'

Craggs, who seemed to be represented by Snitchey, and to be conscious of little or no separate existence or personal individuality, offered a remark of his own in this place. It involved the only idea of which he did not stand seised and possessed in equal moieties with Snitchey; but, he had some partners in it among the wise men of the world.

'It 's made a great deal too easy,' said Mr. Craggs.

'Law is?' asked the Doctor.

'Yes,' said Mr. Craggs, 'everything is. Everything appears to me to be made too easy, now-a-days. It 's the vice of these times. If the world is a joke (I am not prepared to say it isn't), it ought to be made a very difficult joke to crack. It ought to be as hard a struggle, sir, as possible. That 's the intention. But, it 's being made far too easy. We are oiling the gates of life. They ought to be rusty. We shall have them beginning to turn, soon, with a smooth sound. Whereas they ought to grate upon their hinges, sir.'

Mr. Craggs seemed positively to grate upon his own hinges, as he delivered this opinion; to which he communicated immense effect—being a cold, hard, dry man, dressed in grey and white, like a flint; with small twinkles in his eyes, as if something struck sparks out of them. The three natural kingdoms, indeed, had each a faithful representative along this brotherhood of disruptants; for Snitchey was like a magpie or raven (only not so sleek), and the Doctor had a streaked face like a winter-pippin, with here

and there a dimple to express the peckings of the birds, and a very little bit of pigtail behind that stood for the stalk.

As the active figure of a handsome young man, dressed for a journey, and followed by a porter bearing several packages and baskets, entered the orchard at a brisk pace, and with an air of gaiety and hope that accorded well with the morning, these three drew together, like the brothers of the sister Fates, or like the Graces most effectually disguised, or like the three weird prophets on the heath, and greeted him.

'Happy returns, Alf!' said the Doctor, lightly.

'A hundred happy returns of this auspicious day, Mr. Heathfield!' said Snitchey, bowing low.

'Returns!' Craggs murmured in a deep voice, all alone.

'Why, what a battery!' exclaimed Alfred, stopping short, 'and one—two—three—all foreboders of no good, in the great sea before me. I am glad you are not the first I have met this morning: I should have taken it for a bad omen. But, Grace was the first—sweet, pleasant Grace—so I defy you all!'

'If you please, Mister, *I* was the first, you know,' said Clemency Newcome. 'She was walking out here, before sunrise, you remember. I was in the house.'

'That 's true! Clemency was the first,' said Alfred. 'So I defy you with Clemency.'

'Ha, ha, ha,—for Self and Craggs,' said Snitchey. 'What a defiance!'

'Not so bad a one as it appears, maybe,' said Alfred, shaking hands heartily with the Doctor, and also with Snitchey and Craggs, and then looking round. 'Where are the—Good Heavens!'

With a start, productive for the moment of a closer partnership between Jonathan Snitchey and Thomas Craggs than the subsisting articles of agreement in that wise contemplated, he hastily betook himself to where the sisters stood together, and—however, I needn't more particularly explain his manner of saluting Marion first, and Grace afterwards, than by hinting that Mr. Craggs may possibly have considered it 'too easy.'

Perhaps to change the subject, Dr. Jeddler made a hasty move towards the breakfast, and they all sat down at table. Grace presided; but so discreetly stationed herself, as to cut off her sister

and Alfred from the rest of the company. Snitchey and Craggs sat at opposite corners, with the blue bag between them for safety; the Doctor took his usual position, opposite to Grace. Clemency hovered galvanically about the table, as waitress; and the melancholy Britain, at another and a smaller board, acted as Grand Carver of a round of beef and a ham.

'Meat?' said Britain, approaching Mr. Snitchey, with the carving knife and fork in his hands, and throwing the question at him like a missile.

'Certainly,' returned the lawyer.

'Do *you* want any?' to Craggs.

'Lean and well done,' replied that gentleman.

Having executed these orders, and moderately supplied the Doctor (he seemed to know that nobody else wanted anything to eat), he lingered as near the Firm as he decently could, watching with an austere eye their disposition of the viands, and but once relaxing the severe expression of his face. This was on the occasion of Mr. Craggs, whose teeth were not of the best, partially choking, when he cried out with great animation, 'I thought he was gone!'

'Now Alfred,' said the Doctor, 'for a word or two of business, while we are yet at breakfast.'

'While we are yet at breakfast,' said Snitchey and Craggs, who seemed to have no present idea of leaving off.

Although Alfred had not been breakfasting, and seemed to have quite enough business on his hands as it was, he respectfully answered:

'If you please, sir.'

'If anything could be serious,' the Doctor began, 'in such a—'

'Farce as this, sir,' hinted Alfred.

'In such a farce as this,' observed the Doctor, 'it might be this recurrence, on the eve of separation, of a double birth-day, which is connected with many associations pleasant to us four, and with the recollection of a long and amicable intercourse. That 's not to the purpose.'

'Ah! yes, yes, Dr. Jeddler,' said the young man. 'It is to the purpose. Much to the purpose, as my heart bears witness this morning; and as yours does too, I know, if you would let it speak.

I leave your house to-day; I cease to be your ward to-day; we part with tender relations stretching far behind us, that never can be exactly renewed, and with others dawning yet before us,' he looked down at Marion beside him, 'fraught with such considerations as I must not trust myself to speak of now. Come, come!' he added, rallying his spirits and the Doctor at once, 'there 's a serious grain in this large foolish dust-heap, Doctor. Let us allow to-day, that there is One.'

'To-day!' cried the Doctor. 'Hear him! Ha, ha, ha!' Of all days in the foolish year. Why, on this day, the great battle was fought on this ground. On this ground where we now sit, where I saw my two girls dance this morning, where the fruit has just been gathered for our eating from these trees, the roots of which are struck in Men, not earth,—so many lives were lost, that within my recollections, generations afterwards, a churchyard full of bones, and dust of bones, and chips of cloven skulls, has been dug up from underneath our feet here. Yet not a hundred people in that battle knew for what they fought, or why; not a hundred of the inconsiderate rejoicers in the victory, why they rejoiced. Not half a hundred people were the better for the gain or loss. Not half a dozen men agree to this hour on the cause or merits; and nobody, in short, ever knew anything distinct about it, but the mourners of the slain. Serious, too!' said the Doctor, laughing 'Such a system!'

'But, all this seems to me,' said Alfred, 'to be very serious.'

'Serious!' cried the Doctor. 'If you allowed such things to be serious, you must go mad, or die, or climb up to the top of a mountain, and turn hermit.'

'Besides—so long ago,' said Alfred.

'Long ago!' returned the Doctor. 'Do you know what the world has been doing, ever since? Do you know what else it has been doing? *I* don't!'

'It has gone to law a little,' observed Mr. Snitchey, stirring his tea.

'Although the way out has been always made too easy,' said his partner.

'And you 'll excuse my saying, Doctor,' pursued Mr. Snitchey, 'having been already put a thousand times in possession of my

opinion, in the course of our discussions, that, in its having gone to law, and in its legal system altogether, I do observe a serious side—now, really, a something tangible, and with a purpose and intention in it—'

Clemency Newcome made an angular tumble against the table, occasioning a sounding clatter among the cups and saucers.

'Heyday! what 's the matter there?' exclaimed the Doctor.

'It 's this evil-inclined blue bag,' said Clemency, 'always tripping up somebody!'

'With a purpose and intention in it, I was saying,' resumed Snitchey, 'that commands respect. Life a farce, Dr. Jeddler? With law in it?'

The Doctor laughed, and looked at Alfred.

'Granted, if you please, that war is foolish,' said Snitchey. 'There we agree. For example. Here 's a smiling country,' pointing it out with his fork, 'once overrun by soldiers—trespassers every man of 'em—and laid waste by fire and sword. He, he, he! The idea of any man exposing himself, voluntarily, to fire and sword! Stupid, wasteful, positively ridiculous; you laugh at your fellow-creatures, you know, when you think of it! But take this smiling country as it stands. Think of the laws appertaining to real property; to the bequest and devise of real property; to the mortgage and redemption of real property; to leasehold, freehold, and copyhold estate; think,' said Mr. Snitchey, with such great emotion that he actually smacked his lips, 'of the complicated laws relating to title and proof of title, with all the contradictory precedents and numerous acts of parliament connected with them; think of the infinite number of ingenious and interminable chancery suits, to which this pleasant prospect may give rise; and acknowledge, Dr. Jeddler, that there is a green spot in the scheme about us! I believe,' said Mr. Snitchey, looking at his partner, 'that I speak for Self and Craggs?'

Mr. Craggs having signified assent, Mr. Snitchey, somewhat freshened by his recent eloquence, observed that he would take a little more beef and another cup of tea.

'I don't stand up for life in general,' he added, rubbing his hands and chuckling, 'it 's full of folly; full of something worse. Professions of trust, and confidence, and unselfishness, and all

that! Bah, bah, bah! We see what they 're worth. But you mustn't laugh at life; you 've got a game to play; a very serious game indeed! Everybody 's playing against you, you know, and you 're playing against them. Oh! it 's a very interesting thing. There are deep moves upon the board. You must only laugh, Dr. Jeddler, when you win—and then not much. He, he, he! And then not much,' repeated Snitchey, rolling his head and winking his eye, as if he would have added, 'you may do this instead!'

'Well, Alfred!' cried the Doctor, 'what do you say now?'

'I say, sir,' replied Alfred, 'that the greatest favour you could do me, and yourself too I am inclined to think, would be to try sometimes to forget this battle-field and others like it in that broader battle-field of Life, on which the sun looks every day.'

'Really, I 'm afraid that wouldn't soften his opinions, Mr. Alfred,' said Snitchey. 'The combatants are very eager and very bitter in that same battle of Life. There 's a great deal of cutting and slashing, and firing into people's heads from behind. There is terrible treading down, and trampling on. It is rather a bad business.'

'I believe, Mr. Snitchey,' said Alfred, 'there are quiet victories and struggles, great sacrifices of self, and noble acts of heroism, in it—even in many of its apparent lightnesses and contradictions —not the less difficult to achieve, because they have no earthly chronicle or audience done every day in nooks and corners, and in little households, and in men's and women's hearts—any one of which might reconcile the sternest man to such a world, and fill him with belief and hope in it, though two-fourths of its people were at war, and another fourth at law; and that 's a bold word.'

Both the sisters listened keenly.

'Well, well!' said the Doctor, 'I am too old to be converted, even by my friend Snitchey here, or my good spinster sister, Martha Jeddler; who had what she calls her domestic trials ages ago, and has led a sympathising life with all sorts of people ever since; and who is so much of your opinion (only she 's less reasonable and more obstinate, being a woman), that we can't agree, and seldom meet. I was born upon this battle-field. I began, as a boy, to have my thoughts directed to the real history of a battle-field. Sixty years have gone over my head, and I have never seen the

Christian world, including Heaven knows how many loving mothers and good enough girls like mine here, anything but mad for a battle-field. The same contradictions prevail in everything. One must either laugh or cry at such stupendous inconsistencies; and I prefer to laugh.'

Britain, who had been paying the profoundest and most melancholy attention to each speaker in his turn, seemed suddenly to decide in favour of the same preference, if a deep sepulchral sound that escaped him might be construed into a demonstration of risibility. His face, however, was so perfectly unaffected by it, both before and afterwards, that although one or two of the breakfast party looked round as being startled by a mysterious noise, nobody connected the offender with it.

Except his partner in attendance, Clemency Newcome; who rousing him with one of those favourite joints, her elbows, inquired, in a reproachful whisper, what he laughed at.

'Not you!' said Britain.

'Who then?'

'Humanity,' said Britain. 'That 's the joke!'

'What between master and them lawyers, he 's getting more and more addle-headed every day!' cried Clemency, giving him a lunge with the other elbow, as a mental stimulant. 'Do you know where you are? Do you want to get warning?'

'I don't know anything,' said Britain, with a leaden eye and an immovable visage. 'I don't care for anything. I don't make out anything. I don't believe anything. And I don't want anything.'

Although this forlorn summary of his general condition may have been overcharged in an access of despondency, Benjamin Britain—sometimes called Little Britain, to distinguish him from Great; as we might say Young England, to express Old England with a decided difference—had defined his real state more accurately than might be supposed. For, serving as a sort of man Miles to the Doctor's Friar Bacon, and listening day after day to innumerable orations addressed by the Doctor to various people, all tending to show that his very existence was at best a mistake and an absurdity, this unfortunate servitor had fallen, by degrees, into such an abyss of confused and contradictory suggestions from within and without, that Truth at the bottom of her

well, was on the level surface as compared with Britain in the depths of his mystification. The only point he clearly comprehended, was, that the new element usually brought into these discussions by Snitchey and Craggs, never served to make them clearer, and always seemed to give the Doctor a species of advantage and confirmation. Therefore, he looked upon the Firm as one of the proximate causes of his state of mind, and held them in abhorrence accordingly.

'But, this is not our business, Alfred,' said the Doctor. 'Ceasing to be my ward (as you have said) today; and leaving us full to the brim of such learning as the Grammar School down here was able to give you, and your studies in London could add to that, and such practical knowledge as a dull old country Doctor like myself could graft upon both; you are away, now, into the world. The first term of probation appointed by your poor father, being over, away you go now, your own master, to fulfil his second desire. And long before your three years' tour among the foreign schools of medicine is finished, you 'll have forgotten us. Lord, you 'll forget us easily in six months!'

'If I do—But, you know better; why should I speak to you!' said Alfred, laughing.

'I don't know anything of the sort,' returned the Doctor. 'What do you say, Marion?'

Marion, trifling with her teacup, seemed to say—but she didn't say it—that he was welcome to forget, if he could. Grace pressed the blooming face against her cheek, and smiled.

'I haven't been, I hope, a very unjust steward in the execution of my trust,' pursued the Doctor; 'but I am to be, at any rate, formally discharged, and released, and what not this morning; and here are our good friends Snitchey and Craggs, with a bagful of papers, and accounts, and documents, for the transfer of the balance of the trust fund to you (I wish it was a more difficult one to dispose of, Alfred, but you must get to be a great man and make it so), and other drolleries of that sort, which are to be signed, sealed, and delivered.'

'And duly witnessed as by law required,' said Snitchey, pushing away his plate, and taking out the papers, which his partner proceeded to spread upon the table; 'and Self and Craggs having

been co-trustees with you, Doctor, in so far as the fund was concerned, we shall want your two servants to attest the signatures —can you read, Mrs. Newcome?'

'I an't married, Mister,' said Clemency.

'Oh! I beg your pardon. I should think not,' chuckled Snitchey, casting his eyes over her extraordinary figure. 'You *can* read?'

'A little,' answered Clemency.

'The marriage service, night and morning, eh?' observed the lawyer, jocosely.

'No,' said Clemency. 'Too hard. I only reads a thimble.'

'Read a thimble!' echoed Snitchey. 'What are you talking about, young woman?'

Clemency nodded. 'And a nutmeg-grater.'

'Why, this is a lunatic! a subject for the Lord High Chancellor!' said Snitchey, staring at her.

—'If possessed of any property,' stipulated Craggs.

Grace, however, interposing, explained that each of the articles in question bore an engraved motto, and so formed the pocket library of Clemency Newcome, who was not much given to the study of books.

'Oh, that 's it, is it, Miss Grace!' said Snitchey.

'Yes, yes. Ha, ha, ha! I thought our friend was an idiot. She looks uncommonly like it,' he muttered, with a supercilious glance. 'And what does the thimble say, Mrs. Newcome?'

'I an't married, Mister,' observed Clemency.

'Well, Newcome. Will that do?' said the lawyer. 'What does the thimble say, Newcome?'

How Clemency, before replying to this question, held one pocket open, and looked down into its yawning depths for the thimble which wasn't there,—and how she then held an opposite pocket open, and seeming to descry it, like a pearl of great price, at the bottom, cleared away such intervening obstacles as a handkerchief, an end of wax candle, a flushed apple, an orange, a lucky penny, a cramp bone, a padlock, a pair of scissors in a sheath more expressively describable as promising young shears, a handful or so of loose beads, several balls of cotton, a needle-case, a cabinet collection of curl-papers, and a biscuit, all of which

articles she entrusted individually and separately to Britain to hold,—is of no consequence.

Nor how, in her determination to grasp this pocket by the throat and keep it prisoner (for it had a tendency to swing, and twist itself round the nearest corner), she assumed and calmly maintained, an attitude apparently inconsistent with the human anatomy and the laws of gravity. It is enough that at last she triumphantly produced the thimble on her finger, and rattled the nutmeg-grater: the literature of both those trinkets being obviously in course of wearing out and wasting away, through excessive friction.

'That 's the thimble, is it, young woman?' said Mr. Snitchey, diverting himself at her expense. 'And what does the thimble say?'

'It says,' replied Clemency, reading slowly round as if it were a tower, 'For-get and For-give.'

Snitchey and Craggs laughed heartily. 'So new!' said Snitchey. 'So easy!' said Craggs. 'Such a knowledge of human nature in it!' said Snitchey. 'So applicable to the affairs of life!' said Craggs.

'And the nutmeg-grater?' inquired the head of the Firm.

'The grater says,' returned Clemency, 'Do as you—wold—be—done by.'

'Do, or you 'll be done brown, you mean,' said Mr. Snitchey.

'I don't understand,' retorted Clemency, shaking her head vaguely. 'I an't no lawyer.'

'I am afraid that if she was, Doctor,' said Mr. Snitchey, turning to him suddenly, as if to anticipate any effect that might otherwise be consequent on this retort, 'she 'd find it to be the golden rule of half her clients. They are serious enough in that—whimsical as your world is—and lay the blame on us afterwards. We, in our profession, are little else than mirrors after all, Mr. Alfred; but, we are generally consulted by angry and quarrelsome people who are not in their best looks, and it 's rather hard to quarrel with us if we reflect unpleasant aspects. I think,' said Mr. Snitchey, 'that I speak for Self and Craggs?'

'Decidedly,' said Craggs.

'And so, if Mr. Britain will oblige us with a mouthful of ink,' said Mr. Snitchey, returning to the papers, 'we 'll sign, seal, and

deliver as soon as possible, or the coach will be coming past before we know where we are.'

If one might judge from his appearance, there was every probability of the coach coming past before Mr. Britain knew where *he* was; for he stood in a state of abstraction, mentally balancing the Doctor against the lawyers, and the lawyers against the Doctor, and their clients against both, and engaged in feeble attempts to make the thimble and nutmeg-grater (a new idea to him) square with anybody's system of philosophy; and, in short, bewildering himself as much as ever his great namesake has done with theories and schools. But, Clemency, who was his good Genius—though he had the meanest possible opinion of her understanding, by reason of her seldom troubling herself with abstract speculations, and being always at hand to do the right thing at the right time—having produced the ink in a twinkling, tendered him the further service of recalling him to himself by the application of her elbows; with which gentle flappers she so jogged his memory, in a more literal construction of that phrase than usual, that he soon became quite fresh and brisk.

How he laboured under an apprehenson not uncommon to persons in his degree, to whom the use of pen and ink is an event, that he couldn't append his name to a document, not of his own writing, without committing himself in some shadowy manner, or somehow signing away vague and enormous sums of money; and how he approached the deeds under protest, and by dint of the Doctor's coercion, and insisted on pausing to look at them before writing (the cramped hand, to say nothing of the phraseology, being so much Chinese to him), and also on turning them round to see whether there was anything fraudulent underneath; and how, having signed his name, he became desolate as one who had parted with his property and rights; I want the time to tell. Also, how the blue bag containing his signature, afterwards had a mysterious interest for him, and he couldn't leave it; also, how Clemency Newcome, in an ecstasy of laughter at the idea of her own importance and dignity, brooded over the whole table with her two elbows, like a spread eagle, and reposed her head upon her left arm as a preliminary to the formation of certain cabalistic characters, which required a deal of ink, and imaginary counter-

parts whereof she executed at the same time with her tongue. Also, how, having once tasted ink, she became thirsty in that regard, as tame tigers are said to be after tasting another sort of fluid, and wanted to sign everything, and put her name in all kinds of places. In brief, the Doctor was discharged of his trust and all its responsibilities; and Alfred, taking it on himself, was fairly started on the journey of life.

'Britain!' said the Doctor. 'Run to the gate, and watch for the coach. Time flies, Alfred.'

'Yes, sir, yes,' returned the young man, hurriedly. 'Dear Grace! a moment! Marion—so young and beautiful, so winning and so much admired, dear to my heart as nothing else in life is—remember! I leave Marion to you!'

'She has always been a sacred charge to me, Alfred. She is doubly so, now. I will be faithful to my trust, believe me.'

'I do believe it, Grace. I know it well. Who could look upon your face, and hear your voice, and not know it! Ah, Grace! If I had your well-governed heart, and tranquil mind, how bravely I would leave this place to-day!'

'Would you?' she answered, with a quiet smile.

'And yet, Grace—Sister, seems the natural word.'

'Use it!' she said quickly. 'I am glad to hear it. Call me nothing else.'

'And yet, sister, then,' said Alfred, 'Marion and I had better have your true and steadfast qualities serving us here, and making us both happier and better. I wouldn't carry them away, to sustain myself, if I could!'

'Coach upon the hill-top!' exclaimed Britain.

'Time flies, Alfred,' said the Doctor.

Marion had stood apart, with her eyes fixed upon the ground; but, this warning being given, her young lover brought her tenderly to where her sister stood, and gave her into her embrace.

'I have been telling Grace, dear Marion,' he said, 'that you are her charge; my precious trust at parting. And when I come back and reclaim you, dearest, and the bright prospect of our married life lies stretched before us, it shall be one of our chief pleasures to consult how we can make Grace happy; how we can anticipate her wishes; how we can show our gratitude and love to her;

how we can return her something of the debt she will have heaped upon us.'

The younger sister had one hand in his; the other rested on her sister's neck. She looked into that sister's eyes, so calm, serene, and cheerful, with a gaze in which affection, admiration, sorrow, wonder, almost veneration, were blended. She looked into that sister's face, as if it were the face of some bright angel. Calm, serene, and cheerful, the face looked back on her and on her lover.

'And when the time comes, as it must one day,' said Alfred,—'I wonder it has never come yet, but Grace knows best, for Grace is always right—when she will want a friend to open her whole heart to, and to be to her something of what she has been to us—then, Marion, how faithful we will prove, and what delight to us to know that she, our dear good sister, loves and is loved again, as we would have her!'

Still the younger sister looked into her eyes, and turned not—even towards him. And still those honest eyes looked back, so calm, serene, and cheerful, on herself and on her lover.

'And when all that is past, and we are old, and living (as we must!) together—close together—talking often of old times,' said Alfred—'these shall be our favourite times among them—this day most of all; and, telling each other what we thought and felt, and hoped and feared at parting; and how we couldn't bear to say good-bye—'

'Coach coming through the wood!' cried Britain.

'Yes! I am ready—and how we met again, so happily in spite of all; we 'll make this day the happiest in all the year, and keep it as a treble birthday. Shall we, dear?'

'Yes!' interposed the elder sister, eagerly, and with a radiant smile. 'Yes! Alfred, don't linger. There 's no time. Say good-bye to Marion. And Heaven be with you!'

He pressed the younger sister to his heart. Released from his embrace, she again clung to her sister; and her eyes, with the same blended look, again sought those so calm, serene, and cheerful.

'Farewell, my boy!' said the Doctor. 'To talk about any serious correspondence or serious affections, and engagements and

so forth, in such a—ha ha ha!—you know what I mean—why that, of course, would be sheer nonsense. All I can say is, that if you and Marion should continue in the same foolish minds, I shall not object to have you for a son-in-law one of these days.'

'Over the bridge!' cried Britain.

'Let it come!' said Alfred, wringing the Doctor's hand stoutly. 'Think of me sometimes, my old friend and guardian, as seriously as you can! Adieu, Mr. Snitchey! Farewell, Mr. Craggs!'

'Coming down the road!' cried Britain.

'A kiss of Clemency Newcome for long acquaintance' sake! Shake hands, Britain! Marion, dearest heart, good-bye! Sister Grace! remember!'

The quiet household figure, and the face so beautiful in its serenity, were turned towards him in reply; but Marion's look and attitude remained unchanged.

The coach was at the gate. There was a bustle with the luggage. The coach drove away. Marion never moved.

'He waves his hat to you, my love,' said Grace. 'Your chosen husband, darling. Look!'

The younger sister raised her head, and, for a moment, turned it. Then, turning back again, and fully meeting, for the first time, those calm eyes, fell sobbing on her neck.

'Oh, Grace. God bless you! But I cannot bear to see it, Grace! It breaks my heart.'

Part the Second

Snitchey and Craggs had a snug little office on the old battle-ground, where they drove a snug little business, and fought a great many small pitched battles for a great many contending parties. Though it could hardly be said of these conflicts that they were running fights—for in truth they generally proceeded at a snail's pace—the part the Firm had in them came so far within the general denomination, that now they took a shot at this Plaintiff, and now aimed a chop at that Defendant, now made a heavy charge at an estate in Chancery, and now had some light skir-

mishing among an irregular body of small debtors, just as the occasion served, and the enemy happened to present himself. The Gazette was an important and profitable feature in some of their fields, as in fields of greater renown; and in most of the Actions wherein they showed their generalship, it was afterwards observed by the combatants that they had had great difficulty in making each other out, or in knowing with any degree of distinctness what they were about, in consequence of the vast amount of smoke by which they were surrounded.

The offices of Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs stood convenient, with an open door down two smooth steps in the market-place; so that any angry farmer inclining towards hot water, might tumble into it at once. Their special council-chamber and hall of conference was an old back-room upstairs, with a low dark ceiling, which seemed to be knitting its brows gloomily in the consideration of tangled points of law. It was furnished with some high-backed leathern chairs, garnished with great goggle-eyed brass nails, of which, every here and there, two or three had fallen out—or had been picked out, perhaps, by the wandering thumbs and fore-fingers of bewildered clients. There was a framed print of a great judge in it, every curl in whose dreadful wig had made a man's hair stand on end. Bales of papers filled the dusty closets, shelves, and tables; and round the wainscot there were tiers of boxes, padlocked and fireproof, with people's names painted outside, which anxious visitors felt themselves, by a cruel enchantment, obliged to spell backwards and forwards, and to make anagrams of, while they sat, seeming to listen to Snitchey and Craggs, without comprehending one word of what they said.

Snitchey and Craggs had each, in private life as in professional existence, a partner of his own. Snitchey and Craggs were the best friends in the world, and had a real confidence in one another; but, Mrs. Snitchey, by a dispensation not uncommon in the affairs of life, was on principle suspicious of Mr. Craggs; and Mrs. Craggs was on principle suspicious of Mr. Snitchey. 'Your Snitcheys indeed,' the latter lady would observe, sometimes, to Mr. Craggs; using that imaginative plural as if in disparagement of an objectionable pair of pantaloons, or other articles not pos-

sessed of a singular number; 'I don't see what you want with your Snitcheys, for my part. You trust a great deal too much to your Snitcheys, *I* think, and I hope you may never find my words come true.' While Mrs. Snitchey would observe to Mr. Snitchey, of Craggs, 'that if ever he was led away by man he was led away by that man, and that if ever she read a double purpose in a mortal eye, she read that purpose in Craggs's eye.' Notwithstanding this, however, they were all very good friends in general: and Mrs Snitchey and Mrs. Craggs maintained a close bond of alliance against 'the office,' which they both considered the Blue chamber, and common enemy, full of dangerous (because unknown) machinations.

In this office, nevertheless, Snitchey and Craggs made honey for their several hives. Here, sometimes, they would linger, of a fine evening, at the window of their council-chamber overlooking the old battle-ground, and wonder (but that was generally at assize time, when much business had made them sentimental) at the folly of mankind, who couldn't always be at peace with one another and go to law comfortably. Here, days, and weeks, and months, and years, passed over them: their calendar, the gradually diminishing number of brass nails in the leathern chairs, and the increasing bulk of papers on the tables. Here, nearly three years' flight had thinned the one and swelled the other, since the breakfast in the orchard; when they sat together in consultation at night.

Not alone; but, with a man of thirty, or about that time of life, negligently dressed, and somewhat haggard in the face, but well-made, well-attired, and well-looking, who sat in the arm-chair of state, with one hand in his breast, and the other in his dishevelled hair, pondering moodily. Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs sat opposite each other at a neighbouring desk. One of the fire-proof boxes, unpadlocked and opened, was upon it; a part of its contents lay strewn upon the table, and the rest was then in course of passing through the hands of Mr. Snitchey; who brought it to the candle, document by document; looked at every paper singly, as he produced it; shook his head, and handed it to Mr. Craggs; who looked it over also, shook his head, and laid it down. Sometimes, they would stop, and shaking their heads in concert,

looked towards the abstracted client. And the name on the box being Michael Warden, Esquire, we may conclude from these premises that the name and the box were both his, and that the affairs of Michael Warden, Esquire, were in a bad way.

'That 's all,' said Mr. Snitchey, turning up the last paper. 'Really there 's no other resource. No other resource.'

'All lost, spent, wasted, pawned, borrowed, and sold, eh?' said the client, looking up.

'All,' returned Mr. Snitchey.

'Nothing else to be done, you say?'

'Nothing at all.'

The client bit his nails, and pondered again.

'And I am not even personally safe in England? You hold to that, do you?'

'In no part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland,' replied Mr. Snitchey.

'A mere prodigal son with no father to go back to, no swine to keep, and no husks to share with them? Eh?' pursued the client, rocking one leg over the other, and searching the ground with his eyes.

Mr. Snitchey coughed, as if to deprecate the being supposed to participate in any figurative illustration of a legal position. Mr. Craggs, as if to express that it was a partnership view of the subject, also coughed.

'Ruined at thirty!' said the client. 'Humph!'

'Not ruined, Mr. Warden,' returned Snitchey. 'Not so bad as that. You have done a good deal towards it, I must say, but you are not ruined. A little nursing—'

'A little Devil,' said the client.

'Mr. Craggs,' said Snitchey, 'will you oblige me with a pinch of snuff? Thank you, sir.'

As the imperturbable lawyer applied it to his nose with great apparent relish and a perfect absorption of his attention in the proceeding, the client gradually broke into a smile, and, looking up, said:

'You talk of nursing. How long nursing?'

'How long nursing?' repeated Snitchey, dusting the snuff from his fingers, and making a slow calculation in his mind. 'For your

involved estate, sir? In good hands? S. and C.'s, say? Six or seven years.'

'To starve for six or seven years!' said the client with a fretful laugh, and an impatient change of his position.

'To starve for six or seven years, Mr. Warden,' said Snitchey, 'would be very uncommon indeed. You might get another estate by showing yourself, the while. But, we don't think you could do it—speaking for Self and Craggs—and consequently don't advise it.'

'What *do* you advise?'

'Nursing, I say,' repeated Snitchey. 'Some few years of nursing by Self and Craggs would bring it round. But to enable us to make terms, and hold terms, and you to keep terms, you must go away; you must live abroad. As to starvation, we could ensure you some hundreds a year to starve upon, even in the beginning—I dare say, Mr. Warden.'

'Hundreds,' said the client. 'And I have spent thousands!'

'That,' retorted Mr. Snitchey, putting the papers slowly back into the cast-iron box, 'there is no doubt about. No doubt a—bout,' he repeated to himself, as he thoughtfully pursued his occupation.

The lawyer very likely knew *his* man; at any rate his dry, shrewd, whimsical manner, had a favourable influence on the client's moody state, and disposed him to be more free and unreserved. Or, perhaps the client knew *his* man, and had elicited such encouragement as he had received, to render some purpose he was about to disclose the more defensible in appearance. Gradually raising his head, he sat looking at his immovable adviser with a smile, which presently broke into a laugh.

'After all,' he said, 'my iron-headed friend—'

Mr. Snitchey pointed out his partner. 'Self and—excuse me—Craggs.'

'I beg Mr. Craggs's pardon,' said the client. 'After all, my iron-headed friends,' he leaned forward in his chair, and dropped his voice a little, 'you don't know half my ruin yet.'

Mr. Snitchey stopped and stared at him. Mr. Craggs also stared.

'I am not only deep in debt,' said the client, 'but I am deep in—'

'Not in love!' cried Snitchey.

'Yes!' said the client, falling back in his chair, and surveying the Firm with his hands in his pockets. 'Deep in love.'

'And not with an heiress, sir?' said Snitchey.

'Not with an heiress.'

'Nor a rich lady?'

'Nor a rich lady that I know of—except in beauty and merit.'

'A single lady, I trust?' said Mr. Snitchey, with great expression.

'Certainly.'

'It 's not one of Dr. Jeddler's daughters?' said Snitchey, suddenly squaring his elbows on his knees, and advancing his face at least a yard.

'Yes!' returned the client.

'Not his younger daughter?' said Snitchey.

'Yes!' returned the client.

'Mr. Craggs,' said Snitchey, much relieved, 'will you oblige me with another pinch of snuff? Thank you! I am happy to say it don't signify, Mr. Warden; she 's engaged, sir, she 's bespoke. My partner can corroborate me. We know the fact.'

'We know the fact,' repeated Craggs.

'Why, so do I perhaps,' returned the client quietly. 'What of that! Are you men of the world, and did you never hear of a woman changing her mind?'

'There certainly have been actions for breach,' said Mr. Snitchey, 'brought against both spinsters and widows, but, in the majority of cases—'

'Cases!' interposed the client, impatiently. 'Don't talk to me of cases. The general precedent is in a much larger volume than any of your law books. Besides, do you think I have lived six weeks in the Doctor's house for nothing?'

'I think, sir,' observed Mr. Snitchey, gravely addressing himself to his partner, 'that of all the scrapes Mr. Warden's horses have brought him into at one time and another—and they have been pretty numerous, and pretty expensive, as none know better than himself, and you, and I—the worst scrape may turn out to

be, if he talks in this way, his having ever been left by one of them at the Doctor's garden wall, with three broken ribs, a snapped collar-bone, and the Lord knows how many bruises. We didn't think so much of it, at the time when we knew he was going on well under the Doctor's hands and roof; but it looks bad now, sir. Bad? It looks very bad. Doctor Jeddler too—our client, Mr. Craggs.'

'Mr. Alfred Heathfield too—a sort of client, Mr. Snitchey,' said Craggs.

'Mr. Michael Warden too, a kind of client,' said the careless visitor, 'and no bad one either: having played the fool for ten or twelve years. However, Mr. Michael Warden has sown his wild oats now—there 's their crop, in that box; and he means to repent and be wise. And in proof of it, Mr. Michael Warden means, if he can, to marry Marion, the Doctor's lovely daughter, and to carry her away with him.'

'Really, Mr. Craggs,' Snitchey began.

'Really, Mr. Snitchey, and Mr. Craggs, partners both,' said the client, interrupting him; 'you know your duty to your clients, and you know well enough, I am sure, that it is no part of it to interfere in a mere love affair, which I am obliged to confide to you. I am not going to carry the young lady off, without her own consent. There 's nothing illegal in it. I never was Mr. Heathfield's bosom friend. I violate no confidence of his. I love where he loves, and I mean to win where he would win, if I can.'

'He can't, Mr. Craggs,' said Snitchey, evidently anxious and discomfited. 'He can't do it, sir. She dotes on Mr. Alfred.'

'Does she?' returned the client.

'Mr. Craggs, she dotes on him, sir,' persisted Snitchey.

'I didn't live six weeks, some few months ago, in the Doctor's house for nothing; and I doubted that soon,' observed the client. 'She would have doted on him, if her sister could have brought it about; but I watched them. Marion avoided his name, avoided the subject: shrunk from the least allusion to it, with evident distress.'

'Why should she, Mr. Craggs, you know? Why should she, sir?' inquired Snitchey.

'I don't know why she should, though there are many likely

reasons,' said the client, smiling at the attention and perplexity expressed in Mr. Snitchey's shining eye, and at his cautious way of carrying on the conversation, and making himself informed upon the subject; 'but I know she does. She was very young when she made the engagement—if it may be called one, I am not even sure of that—and has repented of it, perhaps. Perhaps—it seems a foppish thing to say, but upon my soul I don't mean it in that light—she may have fallen in love with me, as I have fallen in love with her.'

'He, he! Mr. Alfred, her old playfellow too, you remember, Mr. Craggs,' said Snitchey, with a disconcerted laugh; 'knew her almost from a baby!'

'Which makes it the more probable that she may be tired of his idea,' calmly pursued the client, 'and not indisposed to exchange it for the newer one of another lover, who presents himself (or is presented by his horse) under romantic circumstances; has the not unfavourable reputation—with the country girl—of having lived thoughtlessly and gaily, without doing much harm to anybody; and who, for his youth and figure, and so forth—this may seem foppish again, but upon my soul I don't mean it in that light—might perhaps pass muster in a crowd with Mr. Alfred himself.'

There was no gainsaying the last clause, certainly; and Mr. Snitchey, glancing at him, thought so. There was something naturally graceful and pleasant in the very carelessness of his air. It seemed to suggest, of his comely face and well-knit figure, that they might be greatly better if he chose: and that, once roused and made earnest (but he never had been earnest yet), he could be full of fire and purpose. 'A dangerous sort of libertine,' thought the shrewd lawyer, 'to seem to catch the spark he wants, from a young lady's eyes.'

'Now, observe, Snitchey,' he continued, rising and taking him by the button, 'and Craggs,' taking him by the button also, and placing one partner on either side of him, so that neither might evade him. 'I don't ask you for any advice. You are right to keep quite aloof from all parties in such a matter, which is not one in which grave men like you could interfere, on any side. I am briefly going to review in half a dozen words, my position and intention,

and then I shall leave it to you to do the best for me, in money matters, that you can: seeing, that, if I run away with the Doctor's beautiful daughter (as I hope to do, and to become another man under her bright influence), it will be, for the moment, more chargeable than running away alone. But I shall soon make all that up in an altered life.'

'I think it will be better not to hear this, Mr. Craggs?' said Snitchey, looking at him across the client.

'*I* think not,' said Craggs.—Both listened attentively.

'Well! You needn't hear it,' replied their client. 'I 'll mention it, however. I don't mean to ask the Doctor's consent, because he wouldn't give it me. But I mean to do the Doctor no wrong or harm, because (besides there being nothing serious in such trifles, as he says) I hope to rescue his child, my Marion, from what I see—I *know*—she dreads, and contemplates with misery: that is, the return of this old lover. If anything in the world is true, it is true that she dreads his return. Nobody is injured so far. I am so harried and worried here just now, that I lead the life of a flying-fish. I skulk about in the dark, I am shut out of my own house, and warned off my own grounds; but, that house, and those grounds, and many an acre besides, will come back to me one day, as you know and say; and Marion will probably be richer—on your showing, who are never sanguine—ten years hence as my wife, than as the wife of Alfred Heathfield, whose return she dreads (remember that), and in whom or in any man, my passion is not surpassed. Who is injured yet? It is a fair case throughout. My right is as good as his, if she decide in my favour; and I will try my right by her alone. You will like to know no more after this, and I will tell you no more. Now you know my purpose, and wants. When must I leave here?'

'In a week,' said Snitchey. 'Mr. Craggs?'

'In something less, I should say,' responded Craggs.

'In a month,' said the client, after attentively watching the two faces. 'This day month. To-day is Thursday. Succeed or fail, on this day month I go.'

'It 's too long a delay,' said Snitchey; 'much too long. But let it be so. I thought he 'd have stipulated for three,' he murmured to himself. 'Are you going? Good-night, sir!'

'Good-night!' returned the client, shaking hands with the Firm. 'You 'll live to see me making a good use of riches yet. Henceforth the star of my destiny is, Marion!'

'Take care of the stairs, sir,' replied Snitchey; 'for she don't shine there. Good-night!'

'Good-night!'

So they both stood at the stair-head with a pair of office-candles, watching him down. When he had gone away, they stood looking at each other.

'What do you think of all this, Mr. Craggs?' said Snitchey.

Mr. Craggs shook his head.

'It was our opinion, on the day when that release was executed, that there was something curious in the parting of that pair, I recollect,' said Snitchey.

'It was,' said Mr. Craggs.

'Perhaps he deceives himself altogether,' pursued Mr. Snitchey, locking up the fireproof box, and putting it away; 'or, if he don't a little bit of fickleness and perfidy is not a miracle, Mr. Craggs. And yet I thought that pretty face was very true. I thought,' said Mr. Snitchey, putting on his great-coat (for the weather was very cold), drawing on his gloves, and snuffing out one candle, 'that I had even seen her character becoming stronger and more resolved of late. More like her sister's.'

'Mrs. Craggs was of the same opinion,' returned Craggs.

'I 'd really give a trifle to-night,' observed Mr. Snitchey, who was a good-natured man, 'if I could believe that Mr. Warden was reckoning without his host; but, light-headed, capricious, and unballasted as he is, he knows something of the world and its people (he ought to, for he has bought what he does know, dear enough); and I can't quite think that. We had better not interfere: we can do nothing, Mr. Craggs, but keep quiet.'

'Nothing,' returned Craggs.

'Our friend the Doctor makes light of such things,' said Mr. Snitchey, shaking his head. 'I hope he mayn't stand in need of his philosophy. Our friend Alfred talks of the battle of life,' he shook his head again, 'I hope he mayn't be cut down early in the day. Have you got your hat, Mr. Craggs? I am going to put the other candle out.'

Mr. Craggs replying in the affirmative, Mr. Snitchey suited the action to the word, and they groped their way out of the council-chamber, now dark as the subject, or the law in general.

My story passes to a quiet little study, where, on that same night, the sisters and the hale old Doctor sat by a cheerful fireside. Grace was working at her needle. Marion read aloud from a book before her. The Doctor, in his dressing-gown and slippers, with his feet spread out upon the warm rug, leaned back in his easy-chair, and listened to the book, and looked upon his daughters.

They were very beautiful to look upon. Two better faces for a fireside, never made a fireside bright and sacred. Something of the difference between them had been softened down in three years' time; and enthroned upon the clear brow of the younger sister, looking through her eyes, and thrilling in her voice, was the same earnest nature that her own motherless youth had ripened in the elder sister long ago. But she still appeared at once the lovelier and weaker of the two; still seemed to rest her head upon her sister's breast, and put her trust in her, and look into her eyes for counsel and reliance. Those loving eyes, so calm, serene, and cheerful, as of old.

'"And being in her own home,"' read Marion, from the book; '"her home made exquisitely dear by these remembrances, she now began to know that the great trial of her heart must soon come on, and could not be delayed. O Home, our comforter and friend when others fall away, to part with whom, at any step between the cradle and the grave—"'

'Marion, my love!' said Grace.

'Why, Puss!' exclaimed her father, 'what 's the matter?'

She put her hand upon the hand her sister stretched towards her, and read on; her voice still faltering and trembling, though she made an effort to command it when thus interrupted.

'"To part with whom, at any step between the cradle and the grave, is always sorrowful. O Home, so true to us, so often slighted in return, be lenient to them that turn away from thee, and do not haunt their erring footsteps too reproachfully! Let no kind looks, no well-remembered smiles, be seen upon thy phantom

face. Let no ray of affection, welcome, gentleness, forbearance, cordiality, shine from thy white head. Let no old loving word, or tone, rise up in judgment against thy deserter; but if thou canst look harshly and severely, do, in mercy to the Penitent!" '

'Dear Marion, read no more to-night,' said Grace—for she was weeping.

'I cannot,' she replied, and closed the book. 'The words seem all on fire!'

The Doctor was amused at this; and laughed as he patted her on the head.

'What! overcome by a story-book!' said Doctor Jeddler. 'Print and paper! Well, well, it 's all one. It 's as rational to make a serious matter of print and paper as of anything else. But, dry your eyes, love, dry your eyes. I dare say the heroine has got home again long ago, and made it up all round—and if she hasn't, a real home is only four walls; and a fictitious one, mere rags and ink. What 's the matter now?'

'It 's only me, Mister,' said Clemency, putting in her head at the door.

'And what 's the matter with *you?*' said the Doctor.

'Oh, bless you, nothing an't the matter with me,' returned Clemency—and truly too, to judge from her well-soaped face, in which there gleamed as usual the very soul of good-humour, which, ungainly as she was, made her quite engaging. Abrasions on the elbows are not generally understood, it is true, to range within that class of personal charms called beauty-spots. But, it is better, going through the world, to have the arms chafed in that narrow passage, than the temper: and Clemency's was sound and whole as any beauty's in the land.

'Nothing an't the matter with me,' said Clemency, entering, 'but—come a little closer, Mister.'

The Doctor, in some astonishment, complied with this invitation.

'You said I wasn't to give you one before them, you know,' said Clemency.

A novice in the family might have supposed, from her extraordinary ogling as she said it, as well as from a singular rapture or ecstasy which pervaded her elbows, as if she were embracing her-

self, that 'one,' in its most favourable interpretation, meant a chaste salute. Indeed the Doctor himself seemed alarmed, for the moment; but quickly regained his composure, as Clemency, having had recourse to both her pockets—beginning with the right one, going away to the wrong one, and afterwards coming back to the right one again—produced a letter from the Post-Office.

'Britain was riding by on a errand,' she chuckled, handing it to the Doctor, 'and see the mail come in, and waited for it. There 's A. H. in the corner. Mr. Alfred's on his journey home, I bet. We shall have a wedding in the house—there was two spoons in my saucer this morning. Oh Luck, how slow he opens it!'

All this she delivered, by way of soliloquy, gradually rising higher and higher on tiptoe, in her impatience to hear the news, and making a corkscrew of her apron, and a bottle of her mouth. At last, arriving at a climax of suspense, and seeing the Doctor still engaged in the perusal of the letter, she came down flat upon the soles of her feet again, and cast her apron, as a veil, over her head, in a mute despair, and inability to bear it any longer.

'Here! Girls!' cried the Doctor. 'I can't help it: I never could keep a secret in my life. There are not many secrets, indeed, worth being kept in such a—well! never mind that. Alfred 's coming home, my dears, directly.'

'Directly!' exclaimed Marion.

'What! The story-book is soon forgotten!' said the Doctor, pinching her cheek. 'I thought the news would dry those tears. Yes. "Let it be a surprise," he says, here. But I can't let it be a surprise. He must have a welcome.'

'Directly!' repeated Marion.

'Why, perhaps not what your impatience calls "directly,"' returned the Doctor; 'but pretty soon too. Let us see. Let us see. To-day is Thursday, is it not? Then he promises to be here, this day month.'

'This day month!' repeated Marion, softly.

'A gay day and a holiday for us,' said the cheerful voice of her sister Grace, kissing her in congratulation. 'Long looked forward to, dearest, and come at last.'

She answered with a smile; a mournful smile, but full of sisterly affection. As she looked in her sister's face, and listened to the

quiet music of her voice, picturing the happiness of this return, her own face glowed with hope and joy.

And with a something else; a something shining more and more through all the rest of its expression; for which I have no name. It was not exultation, triumph, proud enthusiasm. They are not so calmly shown. It was not love and gratitude alone, though love and gratitude were part of it. It emanated from no sordid thought, for sordid thoughts do not light up the brow, and hover on the lips, and move the spirit like a fluttered light, until the sympathetic figure trembles.

Dr. Jeddler, in spite of his system of philosophy—which he was continually contradicting and denying in practice, but more famous philosophers have done that—could not help having as much interest in the return of his old ward and pupil, as if it had been a serious event. So, he sat himself down in his easy-chair again, stretched out his slippered feet once more upon the rug, read the letter over and over a great many times, and talked it over more times still.

'Ah! The day was,' said the Doctor, looking at the fire, 'when you and he, Grace, used to trot about arm-in-arm, in his holiday time, like a couple of walking dolls. You remember?'

'I remember,' she answered, with her pleasant laugh, and plying her needle busily.

'This day month, indeed!' mused the Doctor. 'That hardly seems a twelvemonth ago. And where was my little Marion then!'

'Never far from her sister,' said Marion, cheerily, 'however little. Grace was everything to me, even when she was a young child herself.'

'True, Puss, true,' returned the Doctor. 'She was a staid little woman, was Grace, and a wise housekeeper, and a busy, quiet, pleasant body; bearing with our humours and anticipating our wishes, and always ready to forget her own, even in those times. I never knew you positive or obstinate, Grace, my darling, even then, on any subject but one.'

'I am afraid I have changed sadly for the worse, since,' laughed Grace, still busy at her work. 'What was that one, father?'

'Alfred, of course,' said the Doctor. 'Nothing would serve you

but you must be called Alfred's wife; so we called you Alfred's wife; and you liked it better, I believe (odd as it seems now) than being called a Duchess, if we could have made you one.'

'Indeed?' said Grace, placidly.

'Why, don't you remember?' inquired the Doctor.

'I think I remember something of it,' she returned, 'but not much. It 's so long ago.' And as she sat at work, she hummed the burden of an old song, which the Doctor liked.

'Alfred will find a real wife soon,' she said, breaking off; 'and that will be a happy time indeed for all of us. My three years' trust is nearly at an end, Marion. It has been a very easy one. I shall tell Alfred, when I give you back to him, that you have loved him dearly all the time, and that he has never once needed my good services. May I tell him so, love?'

'Tell him, dear Grace,' replied Marion, 'that there never was a trust so generously, nobly, steadfastly discharged; and that I have loved *you,* all the time, dearer and dearer every day; and O! how dearly now!'

'Nay,' said her cheerful sister, returning her embrace, 'I can scarcely tell him that; we will leave my deserts to Alfred's imagination. It will be liberal enough, dear Marion; like your own.'

With that, she resumed the work she had for a moment laid down, when her sister spoke so fervently: and with it the old song the Doctor liked to hear. And the Doctor, still reposing in his easy-chair, with his slippered feet stretched out before him on the rug, listened to the tune, and beat time on his knee with Alfred's letter, and looked at his two daughters, and thought that among the many trifles of the trifling world, these trifles were agreeable enough.

Clemency Newcome, in the meantime, having accomplished her mission and lingered in the room until she had made herself a party to the news, descended to the kitchen, where her coadjutor, Mr. Britain, was regaling after supper, surrounded by such a plentiful collection of bright pot-lids, well-scoured saucepans, burnished dinner-covers, gleaming kettles, and other tokens of her industrious habits, arranged upon the walls and shelves, that he sat as in the centre of a hall of mirrors. The majority did not give forth very flattering portraits of him, certainly; nor were they

by any means unanimous in their reflections; as some made him very long-faced, others very broad-faced, some toberably well-looking, others vastly ill-looking, according to their several manners of reflecting: which were as various, in respect of one fact, as those of so many kinds of men. But they all agreed that in the midst of them sat, quite at his ease, an individual with a pipe in his mouth, and a jug of beer at his elbow, who nodded condescendingly to Clemency, when she stationed herself at the same table.

'Well, Clemmy,' said Britain, 'how are you by this time, and what 's the news?'

Clemency told him the news, which he received very graciously. A gracious change had come over Benjamin from head to foot. He was much broader, much redder, much more cheerful, and much jollier in all respects. It seemed as if his face had been tied up in a knot before, and was now untwisted and smoothed out.

'There 'll be another job for Snitchey and Craggs, I suppose,' he observed, puffing slowly at his pipe. 'More witnessing for you and me, perhaps, Clemmy!'

'Lor!' replied his fair companion, with her favourite twist of her favourite joints. 'I wish it was me, Britain!'

'Wish what was you?'

'A-going to be married,' said Clemency.

Benjamin took his pipe out of his mouth and laughed heartily. 'Yes! you 're a likely subject for that!' he said. 'Poor Clem!' Clemency for her part laughed as heartily as he, and seemed as much amused by the idea. 'Yes,' she assented, 'I 'm a likely subject for that; an't I?'

'*You* 'll never be married, you know,' said Mr. Britain, resuming his pipe.

'Don't you think I ever shall though?' said Clemency, in perfect good faith.

Mr. Britain shook his head. 'Not a chance of it!'

'Only think!' said Clemency. 'Well!—I suppose you mean to, Britain, one of these days; don't you?'

A question so abrupt, upon a subject so momentous, required consideration. After blowing out a great cloud of smoke, and looking at it with his head now on this side and now on that, as if it were actually the question, and he were surveying it in various

aspects, Mr. Britain replied that he wasn't altogether clear about it, but—ye-es—he thought he might come to that at last.

'I wish her joy, whoever she may be!' cried Clemency.

'Oh she 'll have that,' said Benjamin, 'safe enough.'

'But she wouldn't have led quite such a joyful life as she will lead, and wouldn't have had quite such a sociable sort of husband as she will have,' said Clemency, spreading herself half over the table, and staring retrospectively at the candle, 'if it hadn't been for—not that I went to do it, for it was accidental, I am sure—if it hadn't been for me; now would she, Britain?'

'Certainly not,' returned Mr. Britain, by this time in that high state of appreciation of his pipe, when a man can open his mouth but a very little way for speaking purposes; and sitting luxuriously immovable in his chair, can afford to turn only his eyes towards a companion, and that very passively and gravely. 'Oh! I 'm greatly beholden to you, you know, Clem.'

'Lor, how nice that is to think of!' said Clemency.

At the same time, bringing her thoughts as well as her sight to bear upon the candle-grease, and becoming abruptly reminiscent of its healing qualities as a balsam, she anointed her left elbow with a plentiful application of that remedy.

'You see I 've made a good many investigations of one sort and another in my time,' pursued Mr. Britain, with the profundity of a sage, 'having been always of an inquiring turn of mind; and I 've read a good many books about the general Rights of things and Wrongs of things, for I went into the literary line myself, when I began life.'

'Did you though!' cried the admiring Clemency.

'Yes,' said Mr. Britain: 'I was hid for the best part of two years behind a bookstall, ready to fly out if anybody pocketed a volume: and after that, I was light porter to a stay and mantua-maker, in which capacity I was employed to carry about, in oilskin baskets, nothing but deceptions—which soured my spirits and disturbed my confidence in human nature; and after that, I heard a world of discussions in this house, which soured my spirits fresh; and my opinion after all is, that, as a safe and comfortable sweetener of the same, and as a pleasant guide through life, there 's nothing like a nutmeg-grater.'

Clemency was about to offer a suggestion, but he stopped her by anticipating it.

'Com-bined,' he added gravely, 'with a thimble.'

'Do as you wold, you know, and cetrer, eh!' observed Clemency, folding her arms comfortably in her delight at this avowal, and patting her elbows. 'Such a short cut, an't it?'

'I 'm not sure,' said Mr. Britain, 'that it 's what would be considered good philosophy. I 've my doubts about that; but, it wears well, and saves a quantity of snarling, which the genuine article don't always.'

'See how you used to go on once, yourself, you know!' said Clemency.

'Ah!' said Mr. Britain. 'But, the most extraordinary thing, Clemmy, is that I should live to be brought round, through you. That 's the strange part of it. Through you! Why, I suppose you haven't so much as half an idea in your head.'

Clemency, without taking the least offence, shook it, and laughed, and hugged herself, and said, 'No, she didn't suppose she had.'

'I 'm pretty sure of it,' said Mr. Britain.

'Oh! I dare say you 're right,' said Clemency. 'I don't pretend to none. I don't want any.'

Benjamin took his pipe from his lips, and laughed till the tears ran down his face. 'What a natural you are, Clemmy!' he said, shaking his head, with an infinite relish of the joke, and wiping his eyes. Clemency, without the smallest inclination to dispute it, did the like, and laughed as heartily as he.

'I can't help liking you,' said Mr. Britain; 'you 're a regular good creature in your way, so shake hands, Clem. Whatever happens, I 'll always take notice of you, and be a friend to you.'

'Will you?' returned Clemency. 'Well! that 's very good of you.'

'Yes, yes,' said Mr. Britain, giving her his pipe to knock the ashes out of it; 'I 'll stand by you. Hark! That 's a curious noise!'

'Noise!' repeated Clemency.

'A footstep outside. Somebody dropping from the wall, it sounded like,' said Britain. 'Are they all a-bed upstairs?'

'Yes, all a-bed by this time,' she replied.

'Didn't you hear anything?'

'No.'

They both listened, but heard nothing.

'I tell you what,' said Benjamin, taking down a lantern. 'I 'll have a look round, before I go to bed myself, for satisfaction's sake. Undo the door while I light this, Clemmy.'

Clemency complied briskly; but observed as she did so, that he would only have his walk for his pains, that it was all his fancy, and so forth. Mr. Britain said 'very likely'; but sallied out, nevertheless, armed with the poker, and casting the light of the lantern far and near in all directions.

'It 's as quiet as a churchyard,' said Clemency, looking after him; 'and almost as ghostly too!'

Glancing back into the kitchen, she cried fearfully, as a light figure stole into her view, 'What 's that!'

'Hush!' said Marion in an agitated whisper. 'You have always loved me, have you not!'

'Loved you, child! You may be sure I have.'

'I am sure. And I may trust you, may I not? There is no one else just now, in whom I *can* trust.'

'Yes,' said Clemency, with all her heart.

'There is some one out there,' pointing to the door, 'whom I must see, and speak with, to-night. Michael Warden, for God's sake retire! Not now!'

Clemency started with surprise and trouble as, following the direction of the speaker's eyes, she saw a dark figure standing in the doorway.

'In another moment you may be discovered,' said Marion. 'Not now! Wait, if you can, in some concealment. I will come presently.'

He waved his hand to her, and was gone.

'Don't go to bed. Wait here for me!' said Marion, hurriedly. 'I have been seeking to speak to you for an hour past. Oh, be true to me!'

Eagerly seizing her bewildered hand, and pressing it with both her own to her breast—an action more expressive, in its passion of entreaty, than the most eloquent appeal in words,—Marion

withdrew; as the light of the returning lantern flashed into the room.

'All still and peaceable. Nobody there. Fancy, I suppose,' said Mr. Britain, as he locked and barred the door. 'One of the effects of having a lively imagination. Halloa! Why, what 's the matter?'

Clemency, who could not conceal the effects of her surprise and concern, was sitting in a chair: pale, and trembling from head to foot.

'Matter!' she repeated, chafing her hands and elbows, nervously, and looking anywhere but at him. 'That 's good in you, Britain, that is! After going and frightening one out of one's life with noises and lanterns, and I don't know what all. Matter! Oh, yes!'

'If you 're frightened out of your life by a lantern, Clemmy,' said Mr. Britain, composedly blowing it out and hanging it up again, 'that apparition 's very soon got rid of. But you 're as bold as brass in general,' he said, stopping to observe her; 'and were, after the noise and the lantern too. What have you taken into your head? Not an idea, eh?'

But, as Clemency bade him good-night very much after her usual fashion, and began to bustle about with a show of going to bed herself immediately, Little Britain, after giving utterance to the original remark that it was impossible to account for a woman's whims, bade her good-night in return, and taking up his candle strolled drowsily away to bed.

When all was quiet, Marion returned.

'Open the door,' she said; 'and stand there close beside me, while I speak to him, outside.'

Timid as her manner was, it still evinced a resolute and settled purpose, such as Clemency could not resist. She softly unbarred the door: but before turning the key, looked round on the young creature waiting to issue forth when she should open it.

The face was not averted or cast down, but looking full upon her, in its pride of youth and beauty. Some simple sense of the slightness of the barrier that interposed itself between the happy home and honoured love of the fair girl, and what might be the desolation of that home, and shipwreck of its dearest treasure, smote so keenly on the tender heart of Clemency, and so filled it

to overflowing with sorrow and compassion, that, bursting into tears, she threw her arms round Marion's neck.

'It 's little that I know, my dear,' cried Clemency, 'very little; but I know that this should not be. Think of what you do!'

'I have thought of it many times,' said Marion, gently.

'Once more,' urged Clemency. 'Till to-morrow.' Marion shook her head.

'For Mr. Alfred's sake,' said Clemency, with homely earnestness. 'Him that you used to love so dearly, once!'

She hid her face, upon the instant, in her hands, repeating 'Once!' as if it rent her heart.

'Let me go out,' said Clemency, soothing her. 'I 'll tell him what you like. Don't cross the door-step to-night. I 'm sure no good will come of it. Oh, it was an unhappy day when Mr. Warden was ever brought here! Think of your good father, darling—of your sister.'

'I have,' said Marion, hastily raising her head. 'You don't know what I do. I *must* speak to him. You are the best and truest friend in all the world for what you have said to me, but I must take this step. Will you go with me, Clemency,' she kissed her on her friendly face, 'or shall I go alone?'

Sorrowing and wondering, Clemency turned the key, and opened the door. Into the dark and doubtful night that lay beyond the threshold, Marion passed quickly, holding by her hand.

In the dark night he joined her, and they spoke together earnestly and long; and the hand that held so fast by Clemency's, now trembled, now turned deadly cold, now clasped and closed on hers, in the strong feeling of the speech it emphasized unconsciously. When they returned, he followed to the door, and pausing there a moment, seized the other hand, and pressed it to his lips. Then, stealthily withdrew.

The door was barred and locked again, and once again she stood beneath her father's roof. Not bowed down by the secret that she brought there, though so young; but, with that same expression on her face for which I had no name before, and shining through her tears.

Again she thanked and thanked her humble friend, and trusted to her, as she said, with confidence, implicitly. Her chamber safe-

ly reached, she fell upon her knees; and with her secret weighing on her heart, could pray!

Could rise up from her prayers, so tranquil and serene, and bending over her fond sister in her slumber, look upon her face and smile—though sadly: murmuring as she kissed her forehead, how that Grace had been a mother to her, ever, and she loved her as a child!

Could draw the passive arm about her neck when lying down to rest—it seemed to cling there, of its own will, protectingly and tenderly even in sleep—and breathe upon the parted lips, God bless her!

Could sink into a peaceful sleep, herself; but for one dream, in which she cried out, in her innocent and touching voice, that she was quite alone, and they had all forgotten her.

A month soon passes, even at its tardiest pace. The month appointed to elapse between that night and the return, was quick of foot, and went by, like a vapour.

The day arrived. A raging winter day, that shook the old house, sometimes, as if it shivered in the blast. A day to make home doubly home. To give the chimney-corner new delights. To shed a ruddier glow upon the faces gathered round the hearth, and draw each fireside group into a closer and more social league, against the roaring elements without. Such a wild winter day as best prepares the way for shut-out night; for curtained rooms, and cheerful looks; for music, laughter, dancing, light, and jovial entertainment!

All these the Doctor had in store to welcome Alfred back. They knew that he could not arrive till night; and they would make the night air ring, he said, as he approached. All his old friends should congregate about him. He should not miss a face that he had known and liked. No! They should every one be there!

So, guests were bidden, and musicians were engaged, and tables spread, and floors prepared for active feet, and bountiful provision made, of every hospitable kind. Because it was the Christmas season, and his eyes were all unused to English holly and its sturdy green, the dancing-room was garlanded and hung with it; and the red berries gleamed an English welcome to him, peeping from among the leaves.

It was a busy day for all of them: a busier day for none of them than Grace, who noiselessly presided everywhere, and was the cheerful mind of all the preparations. Many a time that day (as well as many a time within the fleeting month preceding it), did Clemency glance anxiously, and almost fearfully, at Marion. She saw her paler, perhaps, than usual: but there was a sweet composure on her face that made it lovelier than ever.

At night when she was dressed, and wore upon her head a wreath that Grace had proudly twined about it—its mimic flowers were Alfred's favourites, as Grace remembered when she chose them—that old expression, pensive, almost sorrowful, and yet so spiritual, high, and stirring, sat again upon her brow, enhanced a hundred-fold.

'The next wreath I adjust on this fair head, will be a marriage wreath,' said Grace; 'or I am no true prophet, dear.'

Her sister smiled, and held her in her arms.

'A moment, Grace. Don't leave me yet. Are you sure that I want nothing more?'

Her care was not for that. It was her sister's face she thought of, and her eyes were fixed upon it, tenderly.

'My art,' said Grace, 'can go no farther, dear girl; nor your beauty. I never saw you look so beautiful as now.'

'I never was so happy,' she returned.

'Ay, but there is a greater happiness in store. In such another home, as cheerful and as bright as this looks now,' said Grace, 'Alfred and his young wife will soon be living.'

She smiled again. 'It is a happy home, Grace, in your fancy. I can see it in your eyes. I know it *will* be happy, dear. How glad I am to know it.'

'Well,' cried the Doctor, bustling in. 'Here we are, all ready for Alfred, eh? He can't be here until pretty late—an hour or so before midnight—so there 'll be plenty of time for making merry before he comes. He 'll not find us with the ice unbroken. Pile up the fire here, Britain! Let it shine upon the holly till it winks again. It 's a world of nonsense, Puss; true lovers and all the rest of it—all nonsense; but we 'll be nonsensical with the rest of 'em, and give our true lover a mad welcome. Upon my word!' said the old Doctor, looking at his daughters proudly,

'I 'm not clear to-night, among other absurdities, but that I 'm the father of two handsome girls.'

'All that one of them has ever done, or may do—may do, dearest father—to cause you pain or grief, forgive her,' said Marion, 'forgive her now, when her heart is full. Say that you forgive her. That you will forgive her. That she shall always share your love, and—,' and the rest was not said, for her face was hidden on the old man's shoulder.

'Tut, tut, tut,' said the Doctor gently. 'Forgive! What have I to forgive? Heydey, if our true lovers come back to flurry us like this, we must hold 'em at a distance; we must send expresses out to stop 'em short upon the road, and bring 'em on a mile or two a day, until we 're properly prepared to meet 'em. Kiss me, Puss. Forgive! Why, what a silly child you are. If you had vexed and crossed me fifty times a day, instead of not at all, I 'd forgive you everything, but such a supplication. Kiss me again, Puss. There! Prospective and retrospective—a clear score between us. Pile up the fire here! Would you freeze the people on this bleak December night! Let us be light, and warm, and merry, or I 'll not forgive some of you!'

So gaily the old Doctor carried it! And the fire was piled up, and the lights were bright, and company arrived, and a murmuring of lively tongues began, and already there was a pleasant air of cheerful excitement stirring through all the house.

More and more company came flocking in. Bright eyes sparkled upon Marion; smiling lips gave her joy of his return; sage mothers fanned themselves, and hoped she mightn't be too youthful and inconstant for the quiet round of home; impetuous fathers fell into disgrace for too much exaltation of her beauty; daughters envied her; sons envied him; innumerable pairs of lovers profited by the occasion; all were interested, animated, and expectant.

Mr. and Mrs. Craggs came arm in arm, but Mrs. Snitchey came alone. 'Why, what 's become of *him?*' inquired the Doctor.

The feather of a Bird of Paradise in Mrs. Snitchey's turban, trembled as if the Bird of Paradise were alive again, when she said that doubtless Mr. Craggs knew. *She* was never told.

'That nasty office,' said Mrs. Craggs.

'I wish it was burnt down,' said Mrs. Snitchey.

'He 's—he 's—there 's a little matter of business that keeps my partner rather late,' said Mr. Craggs, looking uneasily about him.

'Oh—h! Business. Don't tell me!' said Mrs. Snitchey.

'*We* know what business means,' said Mrs. Craggs.

But their not knowing what it meant, was perhaps the reason why Mrs. Snitchey's Bird of Paradise feather quivered so portentously, and why all the pendant bits on Mrs. Craggs's ear-rings shook like little bells.

'I wonder *you* could come away, Mr. Craggs, said his wife.

'Mr. Craggs is fortunate, I 'm sure!' said Mrs. Snitchey.

'That office so engrosses 'em,' said Mrs. Craggs.

'A person with an office has no business to be married at all,' said Mrs. Snitchey.

Then, Mrs Snitchey said, within herself, that that look of hers had pierced to Craggs's soul, and he knew it; and Mrs. Craggs observed to Craggs, that 'his Snitcheys' were deceiving him behind his back, and he would find it out when it was too late.

Still, Mr. Craggs, without much heeding these remarks, looked uneasily about until his eye rested on Grace, to whom he immediately presented himself.

'Good evening, ma'am,' said Craggs. 'You look charmingly. Your—Miss—your sister, Miss Marion, is she—'

'Oh she 's quite well, Mr. Craggs.'

'Yes—I—is she here?' asked Craggs.

'Here! Don't you see her yonder? Going to dance?' said Grace

Mr. Craggs put on his spectacles to see the better; looked at her through them, for some time; coughed; and put them, with an air of satisfaction, in their sheath again, and in his pocket.

Now the music struck up, and the dance commenced. The bright fire crackled and sparkled, rose and fell, as though it joined the dance itself, in right good fellowship. Sometimes, it roared as if it would make music too. Sometimes, it flashed and beamed as if it were the eye of the old room: it winked too, sometimes, like a knowing patriarch, upon the youthful whisperers in corners. Sometimes, it sported with the holly-boughs: and, shining on the leaves by fits and starts, made them look as if they were in the cold winter night again, and fluttering in the wind. Sometimes

its genial humour grew obstreperous, and passed all bounds; and then it cast into the room, among the twinkling feet, with a loud burst, a shower of harmless little sparks, and in its exultation leaped and bounded, like a mad thing, up the broad cold chimney.

Another dance was near its close, when Mr. Snitchey touched his partner, who was looking on, upon the arm.

Mr. Craggs started, as if his familiar had been a spectre.

'Is he gone?' he asked.

'Hush! He has been with me,' said Snitchey, 'for three hours and more. He went over everything. He looked into all our arrangements for him, and was very particular indeed. He—Humph!'

The dance was finished Marion passed close before him, as he spoke. She did not observe him, or his partner; but, looked over her shoulder towards her sister in the distance, as she slowly made her way into the crowd, and passed out of their view.

'You see! All safe and well,' said Mr. Craggs. 'He didn't recur to that subject, I suppose?'

'Not a word.'

'And is he really gone? Is he safe away?'

'He keeps to his word. He drops down the river with the tide in that shell boat of his, and so goes out to the sea on this dark night!—a dare-devil he is—before the wind. There 's no such lonely road anywhere else. That 's one thing. The tide flows, he says, an hour before midnight—about this time. I 'm glad it 's over.' Mr. Snitchey wiped his forehead, which looked hot and anxious.

'What do you think,' said Mr. Craggs, 'about—'

'Hush!' replied his cautious partner, looking straight before him. 'I understand you. Don't mention names, and don't let us seem to be talking secrets. I don't know what to think; and to tell you the truth, I don't care now. It 's a great relief. His self-love deceived him, I suppose. Perhaps the young lady coquetted a little. The evidence would seem to point that way. Alfred not arrived?'

'Not yet,' said Mr. Craggs. 'Expected every minute.'

'Good' Mr. Snitchey wiped his forehead again. 'It 's a great relief. I haven't been so nervous since we 've been in partnership. I intend to spend the evening now, Mr. Craggs.'

Mrs. Craggs and Mrs. Snitchey joined them as he announced

this intention. The Bird of Paradise was in a state of extreme vibration, and the little bells were ringing quite audibly.

'It has been the theme of general comment, Mr. Snitchey,' said Mrs Snitchey. 'I hope the office is satisfied.'

'Satisfied with what, my dear?' asked Mr. Snitchey.

'With the exposure of a defenceless woman to ridicule and remark,' returned his wife. 'That is quite in the way of the office, *that* is.'

'I really, myself,' said Mrs Craggs, 'have been so long accustomed to connect the office with everything opposed to domesticity, that I am glad to know it as the avowed enemy of my peace. There is something honest in that, at all events.'

'My dear,' urged Mr. Craggs, 'your good opinion is invaluable, but *I* never avowed that the office was the enemy of your peace.'

'No,' said Mrs. Craggs, ringing a perfect peal upon the little bells. 'Not you, indeed. You wouldn't be worthy of the office, if you had the candour to.'

'As to my having been away to-night, my dear,' said Mr. Snitchey, giving her his arm, 'the deprivation has been mine, I 'm sure; but, as Mr. Craggs knows—'

Mrs. Snitchey cut this reference very short by hitching her husband to a distance, and asking him to look at that man. To do her the favour to look at him!

'At which man, my dear?' said Mr. Snitchey.

'Your Chosen companion; *I* 'm no companion to you, Mr. Snitchey.'

'Yes, yes, you are, my dear,' he interposed.

'No, no, I 'm not,' said Mrs. Snitchey with a majestic smile. 'I know my station. Will you look at your chosen companion, Mr. Snitchey; at your referee, at the keeper of your secrets, at the man you trust; at your other self, in short?'

The habitual association of Self with Craggs, occasioned Mr. Snitchey to look in that direction.

'If you can look that man in the eye this night,' said Mrs. Snitchey, 'and not know that you are deluded, practised upon, made the victim of his arts, and bent down prostrate to his will by some unaccountable fascination which it is impossible to ex-

plain and against which no warning of mine is of the least avail, all I can say is—I pity you!'

At the very same moment Mrs. Craggs was oracular on the cross subject. Was it possible, she said, that Craggs could so blind himself to his Snitcheys, as not to feel his true position? Did he mean to say that he had seen his Snitcheys come into that room, and didn't plainly see that there was reservation, cunning, treachery, in the man? Would he tell her that his very action, when he wiped his forehead and looked so stealthily about him, didn't show that there was something weighing on the conscience of his precious Snitcheys (if he had a conscience), that wouldn't bear the light? Did anybody but his Snitcheys come to festive entertainments like a burglar?—which, by the way, was hardly a clear illustration of the case, as he had walked in very mildly at the door. And would he still assert to her at noonday (it being nearly midnight), that his Snitcheys were to be justified through thick and thin, against all facts, and reason, and experience?

Neither Snitchey nor Craggs openly attempted to stem the current which had thus set in, but, both were content to be carried gently along it, until its force abated. This happened at about the same time as a general movement for a country dance; when Mr. Snitchey proposed himself as a partner to Mrs. Craggs, and Mr. Craggs gallantly offered himself to Mrs. Snitchey; and after some slight evasions as 'why don't you ask somebody else?' and 'you 'll be glad, I know, if I decline,' and 'I wonder you can dance out of the office' (but this jocosely now), each lady graciously accepted, and took her place.

It was an old custom among them, indeed, to do so, and to pair off, in like manner, at dinners and suppers; for they were excellent friends, and on a footing of easy familiarity. Perhaps the false Craggs and the wicked Snitchey were a recognised fiction with the two wives, as Doe and Roe, incessantly running up and down bailiwicks, were with the two husbands: or, perhaps the ladies had instituted, and taken upon themselves, these two shares in the business, rather than be left out of it altogether. But, certain it is, that each wife went as gravely and steadily to work in her vocation as her husband did in his, and would have considered it almost impossible for the Firm to maintain a suc-

cessful and respectable existence, without her laudable exertions.

But, now, the Bird of Paradise was seen to flutter down the middle; and the little bells began to bounce and jingle in pousette; and the Doctor's rosy face spun round and round, like an expressive pegtop highly varnished; and breathless Mr. Craggs began to doubt already, whether country dancing had been made 'too easy,' like the rest of life; and Mr. Snitchey, with his nimble cuts and capers, footed it for Self and Craggs, and half a dozen more.

Now, too, the fire took fresh courage, favoured by the lively wind the dance awakened, and burnt clear and high. It was the Genius of the room, and present everywhere. It shone in people's eyes, it sparkled in the jewels on the snowy necks of girls, it twinkled at their ears as if it whispered to them slyly, it flashed about their waists, it flickered on the ground and made it rosy for their feet, it bloomed upon the ceiling that its glow might set off their bright faces, and it kindled up a general illumination in Mrs. Craggs's little belfry.

Now, too, the lively air that fanned it, grew less gentle as the music quickened and the dance proceeded with new spirit; and a breeze arose that made the leaves and berries dance upon the wall, as they had often done upon the trees; and the breeze rustled in the room as if an invisible company of fairies, treading in the footsteps of the good substantial revellers, were whirling after them. Now, too, no feature of the Doctor's face could be distinguished as he spun and spun; and now there seemed a dozen Birds of Paradise in fitful flight; and now there were a thousand little bells at work; and now a fleet of flying skirts was ruffled by a little tempest, when the music gave in, and the dance was over.

Hot and breathless as the Doctor was, it only made him more impatient for Alfred's coming

'Anything been seen, Britain? Anything been heard?'

'Too dark to see far, sir. Too much noise inside the house to hear.'

'That's right! The gayer welcome for him. How goes the time?'

'Just twelve, sir. He can't be long, sir.'

'Stir up the fire, and throw another log upon it,' said the Doctor. 'Let him see his welcome blazing out upon the night—good boy!—as he comes along!'

He saw it—Yes! From the chaise he caught the light, as he turned the corner by the old church. He knew the room from which it shone. He saw the wintry branches of the old trees between the light and him He knew that one of those trees rustled musically in the summer time at the window of Marion's chamber.

The tears were in his eyes. His heart throbbed so violently that he could hardly bear his happiness. How often he had thought of this time—pictured it under all circumstances—feared that it might never come—yearned, and wearied for it—far away!

Again the light! Distinct and ruddy; kindled, he knew, to give him welcome, and to speed him home. He beckoned with his hand, and waved his hat, and cheered out, loud, as if the light were they, and they could see and hear him, as he dashed towards them through the mud and mire, triumphantly.

Stop! He knew the Doctor, and understood what he had done. He would not let it be a surprise to them. But he could make it one, yet, by going forward on foot. If the orchard-gate were open, he could enter there; if not, the wall was easily climbed, as he knew of old; and he would be among them in an instant.

He dismounted from the chaise, and telling the driver—even that was not easy in his agitation—to remain behind for a few minutes, and then to follow slowly, ran on with exceeding swiftness, tried the gate, scaled the wall, jumped down on the other side, and stood panting in the old orchard.

There was a frosty rime upon the trees, which, in the faint light of the clouded moon, hung upon the smaller branches like dead garlands. Withered leaves crackled and snapped beneath his feet, as he crept softly on towards the house. The desolation of a winter night sat brooding on the earth, and in the sky. But, the red light came cheerily towards him from the windows; figures passed and repassed there; and the hum and murmur of voices greeted his ear sweetly.

Listening for hers: attempting, as he crept on, to detach it from the rest, and half-believing that he heard it: he had nearly

reached the door, when it was abruptly opened, and a figure coming out encountered his. It instantly recoiled with a half-suppressed cry.

'Clemency,' he said, 'don't you know me?'

'Don't come in!' she answered, pushing him back. 'Go away. Don't ask me why. Don't come in.'

'What is the matter?' he exclaimed.

'I don't know. I—I am afraid to think. Go back. Hark!'

There was a sudden tumult in the house. She put her hands upon her ears. A wild scream, such as no hands could shut out, was heard; and Grace—distraction in her looks and manner—rushed out at the door.

'Grace!' He caught her in his arms. 'What is it! Is she dead!'

She disengaged herself, as if to recognise his face, and fell down at his feet.

A crowd of figures came about them from the house. Among them was her father, with a paper in his hand.

'What is it!' cried Alfred, grasping his hair with his hands, and looking in an agony from face to face, as he bent upon his knee beside the insensible girl. 'Will no one look at me? Will no one speak to me? Does no one know me? Is there no voice among you all, to tell me what it is!'

There was a murmur among them. 'She is gone.'

'Gone!' he echoed.

'Fled, my dear Alfred!' said the Doctor, in a broken voice, and with his hands before his face. 'Gone from her home and us. To-night! She writes that she has made her innocent and blameless choice—entreats that we will forgive her—prays that we will not forget her—and is gone.'

'With whom? Where?'

He started up, as if to follow in pursuit; but, when they gave way to let him pass, looking wildly round upon them, staggered back, and sunk down in his former attitude, clasping one of Grace's cold hands in his own.

There was a hurried running to and fro, confusion, noise, disorder, and no purpose. Some proceeded to disperse themselves about the roads, and some took horse, and some got lights, and some conversed together, urging that there was no trace or track

to follow. Some approached him kindly, with the view of offering consolation; some admonished him that Grace must be removed into the house, and that he prevented it. He never heard them, and he never moved.

The snow fell fast and thick. He looked up for a moment in the air, and thought that those white ashes strewn upon his hopes and misery, were suited to them well. He looked round on the whitening ground, and thought how Marion's foot-prints would be hushed and covered up, as soon as made, and even that remembrance of her blotted out. But he never felt the weather and he never stirred.

Part the Third

The world had grown six years older since that night of the return. It was a warm autumn afternoon, and there had been heavy rain. The sun burst suddenly from among the clouds; and the old battle-ground, sparkling brilliantly and cheerfully at sight of it in one green place, flashed a responsive welcome there, which spread along the country side as if a joyful beacon had been lighted up, and answered from a thousand stations.

How beautiful the landscape kindling in the light, and that luxuriant influence passing on like a celestial presence, brightening everything! The wood, a sombre mass before, revealed its varied tints of yellow, green, brown, red: its different forms of trees, with raindrops glittering on their leaves and twinkling as they fell. The verdant meadow-land, bright and glowing, seemed as if it had been blind, a minute since, and now had found a sense of sight wherewith to look up at the shining sky. Corn-fields, hedge-rows, fences, home-steads, and clustered roofs, the steeple of the church, the stream, the water-mill, all sprang out of the gloomy darkness smiling. Birds sang sweetly, flowers raised their drooping heads, fresh scents arose from the invigorated ground; the blue expanse above, extended and diffused itself; already the sun's slanting rays pierced mortally the sullen bank of cloud that lingered in its flight: and a rainbow, spirit of all the colours that

adorned the earth and sky, spanned the whole arch with its triumphant glory.

At such a time, one little roadside Inn, snugly sheltered behind a great elm-tree with a rare seat for idlers encircling its capacious bole, addressed a cheerful front towards the traveller, as a house of entertainment ought, and tempted him with many mute but significant assurances of a comfortable welcome. The ruddy sign-board perched up in the tree, with its golden letters winking in the sun, ogled the passer-by, from among the green leaves, like a jolly face, and promised good cheer. The horse-trough, full of clear fresh water, and the ground below it sprinkled with droppings of fragrant hay, made every horse that passed, prick up his ears. The crimson curtains in the lower rooms, and the pure white hangings in the little bed-chambers above, beckoned, Come in! with every breath of air. Upon the bright green shutters, there were golden legends about beer and ale, and neat wines, and good beds; and an affecting picture of a brown jug frothing over at the top. Upon the window-sills were flowering plants in bright red pots, which made a lively show against the white front of the house; and in the darkness of the doorway there were streaks of light, which glanced off from the surfaces of bottles and tankards.

On the door-step, appeared a proper figure of a landlord, too; for though he was a short man, he was round and broad, and stood with his hands in his pockets, and his legs just wide enough apart to express a mind at rest upon the subject of the cellar, and in easy confidence—too calm and virtuous to become a swagger—in the general resources of the Inn. The superabundant moisture, trickling from everything after the late rain, set him off well. Nothing near him was thirsty. Certain top-heavy dahlias, looking over the palings of his neat well-ordered garden, had swilled as much as they could carry—perhaps a trifle more—and may have been the worse for liquor; but, the sweet-briar, roses, wall-flowers, the plants at the windows, and the leaves on the old tree, were in the beaming state of moderate company that had taken no more than was wholesome for them, and had served to develop their best qualities. Sparkling dewy drops about them on the ground, they seemed profuse of innocent and sparkling mirth, that

did good where it lighted, softening neglected corners which the steady rain could seldom reach, and hurting nothing.

This village Inn had assumed, on being established, an uncommon sign. It was called The Nutmeg-Grater. And underneath that household word, was inscribed, up in the tree, on the same flaming board, and in the like golden characters, By Benjamin Britain.

At a second glance, and on a more minute examination of his face, you might have known that it was no other than Benjamin Britain himself who stood in the doorway—reasonably changed by time, but for the better; a very comfortable host indeed.

'Mrs. B.,' said Mr. Britain, looking down the road, 'is rather late. It 's tea-time.'

As there was no Mrs. Britain coming, he strolled leisurely out into the road and looked up at the house, very much to his satisfaction. 'It 's just the sort of house,' said Benjamin, 'I should wish to stop at, if I didn't keep it.'

Then, he strolled towards the garden-paling, and took a look at the dahlias. They looked over at him, with a helpless drowsy hanging of their heads: which bobbed again, as the heavy drops of wet dripped off them.

'You must be looked after,' said Benjamin. 'Memorandum, not to forget to tell her so. She 's a long time coming!'

Mr. Britain's better half seemed to be by so very much his better half, that his own moiety of himself was utterly cast away and helpless without her.

'She hadn't much to do, I think,' said Ben. 'There were a few little matters of business after market, but not many. Oh! here we are at last!'

A chaise-cart, driven by a boy, came clattering along the road: and seated in it, in a chair, with a large well-saturated umbrella spread out to dry behind her, was the plump figure of a matronly woman with her bare arms folded across a basket which she carried on her knee, several other baskets and parcels lying crowded around her, and a certain bright good nature in her face and contented awkwardness in her manner, as she jogged to and fro with the motion of her carriage, which smacked of old times, even in the distance. Upon her nearer approach, this

relish of by-gone days was not diminished; and when the cart stopped at the Nutmeg-Grater door, a pair of shoes, alighting from it, slipped nimbly through Mr. Britain's open arms, and came down with a substantial weight upon the pathway, which shoes could hardly have belonged to any one but Clemency Newcome.

In fact they did belong to her, and she stood in them, and a rosy comfortable-looking soul she was: with as much soap on her glossy face as in times of yore, but with whole elbows now, that had grown quite dimpled in her improved condition.

'You 're late, Clemmy!' said Mr. Britain.

'Why, you see, Ben, I 've had a deal to do!' she replied, looking busily after the safe removal into the house of all the packages and baskets: 'eight, nine, ten,—where 's eleven? Oh! my basket 's eleven! It 's all right. Put the horse up, Harry, and if he coughs again give him a warm mash to-night. Eight, nine, ten. Why where 's eleven? Oh I forgot, it 's all right. How 's the children, Ben?'

'Hearty, Clemmy, hearty.'

'Bless their precious faces!' said Mrs. Britain, unbonneting her own round countenance (for she and her husband were by this time in the bar), and smoothing her hair with her open hands. 'Give us a kiss, old man!'

Mr. Britain promptly complied.

'I think,' said Mrs. Britain, applying herself to her pockets and drawing forth an immense bulk of thin books and crumpled papers: a very kennel of dogs'-ears: 'I 've done everything. Bills all settled—turnips sold—brewer's account looked into and paid —'bacco pipes ordered—seventeen pound four, paid into the Bank —Doctor Heathfield's charge for little Clem—you 'll guess what that is—Doctor Heathfield won't take nothing again, Ben.'

'I thought he wouldn't,' returned Britain.

'No. He says whatever family you was to have, Ben, he 'd never put you to the cost of a halfpenny. Not if you was to have twenty.'

Mr. Britain's face assumed a serious expression, and he looked hard at the wall.

'An't it kind of him?' said Clemency.

'Very,' returned Mr. Britain. 'It 's the sort of kindness that I wouldn't presume upon, on any account.'

'No,' retorted Clemency. 'Of course not. Then there 's the pony—he fetched eight pound two; and that an't bad, is it?'

'It 's very good,' said Ben.

'I 'm glad you 're pleased!' exclaimed his wife. 'I thought you would be; and I think that 's all, and so no more at present from yours and cetrer, C. Britain. Ha ha ha! There! Take all the papers, and lock 'em up. Oh! Wait a minute. Here 's a printed bill to stick on the wall. Wet from the printer's. How nice it smells!'

'What 's this?' said Ben, looking over the document.

'I don't know,' replied his wife. 'I haven't read a word of it.'

'"To be sold by Auction,"' read the host of the Nutmeg-Grater, '"unless previously disposed of by private contract."'

'They always put that,' said Clemency.

'Yes, but they don't always put this,' he returned. 'Look here, "Mansion," etc.—"offices," etc., "shrubberies," etc., "ring fence," etc. "Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs," etc., "ornamental portion of the unencumbered freehold property of Michael Warden, Esquire, intending to continue to reside abroad"!'

'Intending to continue to reside abroad!' repeated Clemency.

'Here it is,' said Britain. 'Look!'

'And it was only this very day that I heard it whispered at the old house, that better and plainer news had been half promised of her, soon!' said Clemency, shaking her head sorrowfully, and patting her elbows as if the recollection of old times unconsciously awakened her old habits. 'Dear, dear, dear! There 'll be heavy hearts, Ben, yonder.'

Mr. Britain heaved a sigh, and shook his head, and said he couldn't make it out: he had left off trying long ago. With that remark, he applied himself to putting up the bill just inside the bar window. Clemency, after meditating in silence for a few moments, roused herself, cleared her thoughtful brow, and bustled off to look after the children.

Though the host of the Nutmeg-Grater had a lively regard for his good-wife, it was of the old patronising kind, and she amused him mightily. Nothing would have astonished him so much, as to

have known for certain from any third party, that it was she who managed the whole house, and made him, by her plain straightforward thrift, good-humour, honesty, and industry, a thriving man. So easy it is, in any degree of life (as the world very often finds it), to take those cheerful natures that never assert their merit, at their own modest valuation; and to conceive a flippant liking of people for their outward oddities and eccentricities, whose innate worth, if we would look so far, might make us blush in the comparison!

It was comfortable to Mr. Britain, to think of his own condescension in having married Clemency. She was a perpetual testimony to him of the goodness of his heart, and the kindness of his disposition; and he felt that her being an excellent wife was an illustration of the old precept that virtue is its own reward.

He had finished wafering up the bill, and had locked the vouchers for her day's proceedings in the cupboard—chuckling all the time, over her capacity for business—when, returning with the news that the two Master Britains were playing in the coach-house under the superintendence of one Betsey, and that little Clem was sleeping 'like a picture,' she sat down to tea, which had awaited her arrival, on a little table. It was a very neat little bar, with the usual display of bottles and glasses; a sedate clock, right to the minute (it was half-past five); everything in its place, and everything furbished and polished up to the very utmost.

'It 's the first time I 've sat down quietly to-day, I declare,' said Mrs. Britain, taking a long breath, as if she had sat down for the night; but getting up again immediately to hand her husband his tea, and cut him his bread-and-butter; 'how that bill does set me thinking of old times!'

'Ah!' said Mr. Britain, handling his saucer like an oyster, and disposing of its contents on the same principle.

'That same Mr. Michael Warden,' said Clemency, shaking her head at the notice of sale, 'lost me my old place.'

'And got you your husband,' said Mr. Britain.

'Well! So he did,' retorted Clemency, 'and many thanks to him.'

'Man 's the creature of habit,' said Mr. Britain, surveying her, over his saucer. 'I had somehow got used to you, Clem: and I

found I shouldn't be able to get on without you. So we went and got made man and wife. Ha! ha! We! Who'd have thought it!'

'Who indeed!' cried Clemency. 'It was very good of you, Ben.'

'No, no, no,' replied Mr. Britain, with an air of self-denial. 'Nothing worth mentioning.'

'Oh yes it was, Ben,' said his wife, with great simplicity; 'I'm sure I think so, and am very much obliged to you. Ah!' looking again at the bill; 'when she was known to be gone, and out of reach, dear girl, I couldn't help telling—for her sake quite as much as theirs—what I knew, could I?'

'You told it, anyhow,' observed her husband.

'And Dr. Jeddler,' pursued Clemency, putting down her tea-cup, and looking thoughtfully at the bill, 'in his grief and passion turned me out of house and home! I never have been so glad of anything in all my life, as that I didn't say an angry word to him, and hadn't any angry feeling towards him, even then; for he repented that truly, afterwards. How often he has sat in this room, and told me over and over again he was sorry for it!—the last time, only yesterday, when you were out. How often he has sat in this room, and talked to me, hour after hour, about one thing and another, in which he made believe to be interested!—but only for the sake of the days that are gone by, and because he knows she used to like me, Ben!'

'Why, how did you ever come to catch a glimpse of that, Clem?' asked her husband: astonished that she should have a distinct perception of a truth which had only dimly suggested itself to his inquiring mind.

'I don't know, I'm sure,' said Clemency, blowing her tea, to cool it. 'Bless you, I couldn't tell you, if you was to offer me a reward of a hundred pound.'

He might have pursued this metaphysical subject but for her catching a glimpse of a substantial fact behind him, in the shape of a gentleman attired in mourning, and cloaked and booted like a rider on horseback, who stood at the bar-door. He seemed attentive to their conversation, and not at all impatient to interrupt it.

Clemency hastily rose at this sight. Mr. Britain also rose and

saluted the guest. 'Will you please to walk upstairs, sir? There 's a very nice room upstairs, sir.'

'Thank you,' said the stranger, looking earnestly at Mr. Britain's wife. 'May I come in here?'

'Oh, surely, if you like, sir,' returned Clemency, admitting him. 'What would you please to want, sir?'

The bill had caught his eye, and he was reading it.

'Excellent property that, sir,' observed Mr. Britain.

He made no answer; but, turning round, when he had finished reading, looked at Clemency with the same observant curiosity as before. 'You were asking me,'—he said, still looking at her,—

'What you would please to take, sir,' answered Clemency, stealing a glance at him in return.

'If you will let me have a draught of ale,' he said, moving to a table by the window, 'and will let me have it here, without being any interruption to your meal, I shall be much obliged to you.'

He sat down as he spoke, without any further parley, and looked out at the prospect. He was an easy, well-knit figure of a man in the prime of life. His face, much browned by the sun, was shaded by a quantity of dark hair; and he wore a moustache. His beer being set before him, he filled out a glass, and drank, good-humouredly, to the house; adding, as he put the tumbler down again:

'It 's a new house, is it not?'

'Not particularly new, sir,' replied Mr. Britain.

'Between five and six years old,' said Clemency; speaking very distinctly.

'I think I heard you mention Dr. Jeddler's name, as I came in,' inquired the stranger. 'That bill reminds me of him; for I happen to know something of that story, by hearsay, and through certain connexions of mine.—Is the old man living?'

'Yes, he 's living, sir,' said Clemency.

'Much changed?'

'Since when, sir?' returned Clemency, with remarkable emphasis and expression.

'Since his daughter—went away.'

'Yes! he 's greatly changed since then,' said Clemency. 'He 's grey and old, and hasn't the same way with him at all; but, I

think he 's happy now. He has taken on with his sister since then, and goes to see her very often. That did him good, directly. At first, he was sadly broken down; and it was enough to make one's heart bleed, to see him wandering about, railing at the world; but a great change for the better came over him after a year or two, and then he began to like to talk about his lost daughter, and to praise her, ay and the world too! and was never tired of saying, with the tears in his poor eyes, how beautiful and good she was. He had forgiven her then. That was about the same time as Miss Grace's marriage. Britain, you remember?'

Mr. Britain remembered very well.

'The sister *is* married then,' returned the stranger. He paused for some time before he asked, 'To whom?'

Clemency narrowly escaped oversetting the tea-board, in her emotion at this question.

'Did *you* never hear?' she said.

'I should like to hear,' he replied, as he filled his glass again, and raised it to his lips.

'Ah! It would be a long story, if it was properly told,' said Clemency, resting her chin on the palm of her left hand, and supporting that elbow on her right hand, as she shook her head, and looked back through the intervening years, as if she were looking at a fire. 'It would be a long story, I am sure.'

'But told as a short one,' suggested the stranger.

'Told as a short one,' repeated Clemency in the same thoughtful tone, and without any apparent reference to him, or consciousness of having auditors, 'what would there be to tell? That they grieved together, and remembered her together, like a person dead; that they were so tender of her, never would reproach her, called her back to one another as she used to be, and found excuses for her! Every one knows that. I 'm sure *I* do. No one better,' added Clemency, wiping her eyes with her hand.

'And so,' suggested the stranger.

'And so,' said Clemency, taking him up mechanically, and without any change in her attitude or manner, 'they at last were married. They were married on her birth-day—it comes round again to-morrow—very quiet, very humble like, but very happy. Mr. Alfred said, one night when they were walking in the orchard,

"Grace, shall our wedding-day be Marion's birth-day?" And it was.'

'And they have lived happily together?' said the stranger.

'Ay,' said Clemency. 'No two people ever more so. They have had no sorrow but this.'

She raised her head as with a sudden attention to the circumstances under which she was recalling these events, and looked quickly at the stranger. Seeing that his face was turned toward the window, and that he seemed intent upon the prospect, she made some eager signs to her husband, and pointed to the bill, and moved her mouth as if she were repeating with great energy, one word or phrase to him over and over again. As she uttered no sound, and as her dumb motions like most of her gestures were of a very extraordinary kind, this unintelligible conduct reduced Mr. Britain to the confines of despair. He stared at the table, at the stranger, at the spoons, at his wife—followed her pantomime with looks of deep amazement and perplexity—asked in the same language, was it property in danger, was it he in danger, was it she—answered her signals with other signals expressive of the deepest distress and confusion—followed the motions of her lips —guessed half aloud 'milk and water,' 'monthly warning,' 'mice and walnuts'—and couldn't approach her meaning.

Clemency gave it up at last, as a hopeless attempt; and moving her chair by very slow degrees a little nearer to the stranger, sat with her eyes apparently cast down but glancing sharply at him now and then, waiting until he should ask some other question. She had not to wait long; for he said, presently:

'And what is the after history of the young lady who went away? They know it, I suppose?'

Clemency shook her head. 'I 've heard,' she said 'that Doctor Jeddler is thought to know more of it than he tells. Miss Grace has had letters from her sister, saying that she was well and happy, and made much happier by her being married to Mr. Alfred: and has written letters back. But there 's a mystery about her life and fortunes, altogether, which nothing has cleared up to this hour, and which—'

She faltered here, and stopped.

'And which—' repeated the stranger.

'Which only one other person, I believe, could explain,' said Clemency, drawing her breath quickly.

'Who may that be?' asked the stranger.

'Mr. Michael Warden!' answered Clemency, almost in a shriek: at once conveying to her husband what she would have him understand before, and letting Michael Warden know that he was recognised.

'You remember me, sir?' said Clemency, trembling with emotion; 'I saw just now you did! You remember me, that night in the garden. I was with her!'

'Yes. You were,' he said.

'Yes, sir,' returned Clemency. 'Yes, to be sure. This is my husband, if you please. Ben, my dear Ben, run to Miss Grace—run to Mr. Alfred—run somewhere, Ben! Bring somebody here, directly!'

'Stay!' said Michael Warden, quietly interposing himself between the door and Britain. 'What would you do?'

'Let them know that you are here, sir!' answered Clemency, clapping her hands in sheer agitation. 'Let them know that they may hear of her, from your own lips: let them know that she is not quite lost to them, but that she will come home again yet, to bless her father and her loving sister—even her old servant, even me,' she struck herself upon the breast with both hands, 'with a sight of her sweet face. Run, Ben, run!' And still she pressed him on towards the door, and still Mr. Warden stood before it, with his hand stretched out, not angrily, but sorrowfully.

'Or perhaps,' said Clemency, running past her husband, and catching in her emotion at Mr. Warden's cloak, 'perhaps she 's here now; perhaps she 's close by. I think from your manner she is. Let me see her, sir, if you please. I waited on her when she was a little child. I saw her grow to be the pride of all this place. I knew her when she was Mr. Alfred's promised wife. I tried to warn her when you tempted her away. I know what her old home was when she was like the soul of it, and how it changed when she was gone and lost. Let me speak to her, if you please!'

He gazed at her with compassion, not unmixed with wonder: but, he made no gesture of assent.

'I don't think she *can* know,' pursued Clemency, 'how truly

they forgive her; how they love her; what joy it would be to them, to see her once more. She may be timorous of going home. Perhaps if she sees me, it may give her new heart. Only tell me truly, Mr. Warden, is she with you?'

'She is not,' he answered, shaking his head.

This answer, and his manner, and his black dress, and his coming back so quietly, and his announced intention of continuing to live abroad, explained it all. Marion was dead.

He didn't contradict her; yes, she was dead! Clemency sat down, hid her face upon the table, and cried.

At that moment, a grey-headed old gentleman came running in: quite out of breath, and panting so much that his voice was scarcely to be recognised as the voice of Mr. Snitchey.

'Good Heaven, Mr. Warden!' said the lawyer, taking him aside, 'what wind has blown—' He was so blown himself, that he couldn't get on any further until after a pause, when he added, feebly, 'you here?'

'An ill-wind, I am afraid,' he answered. 'If you could have heard what has just passed—how I have been besought and entreated to perform impossibilities—what confusion and affliction I carry with me!'

'I can guess it all. But why did you ever come here, my good sir?' retorted Snitchey.

'Come! How should I know who kept the house? When I sent my servant on to you, I strolled in here because the place was new to me; and I had a natural curiosity in everything new and old, in these old scenes; and it was outside the town. I wanted to communicate with you, first, before appearing there. I wanted to know what people would say to me. I see by your manner that you can tell me. If it were not for your confounded caution, I should have been possessed of everything long ago.'

'Our caution!' returned the lawyer, 'speaking for Self and Craggs—deceased,' here Mr. Snitchey, glancing at his hat-band, shook his head, 'how can you reasonably blame us, Mr. Warden? It was understood between us that the subject was never to be renewed, and that it wasn't a subject on which grave and sober men like us (I made a note of your observations at the time)

could interfere. Our caution too! When Mr. Craggs, sir, went down to his respected grave in the full belief—'

'I had given a solemn promise of silence until I should return, whenever that might be,' interrupted Mr. Warden; 'and I have kept it.'

'Well, sir, and I repeat it,' returned Mr. Snitchey, 'we were bound to silence too. We were bound to silence in our duty towards ourselves, and in our duty towards a variety of clients, you among them, who were as close as wax. It was not our place to make inquiries of you on such a delicate subject. I had my suspicions, sir; but, it is not six months since I have known the truth, and been assured that you lost her.'

'By whom?' inquired his client.

'By Doctor Jeddler himself, sir, who at last reposed that confidence in me voluntarily. He, and only he, has known the whole truth, years and years.'

'And you know it?' said his client.

'I do, sir!' replied Snitchey; 'and I have also reason to know that it will be broken to her sister to-morrow evening. They have given her that promise. In the meantime, perhaps you 'll give me the honour of your company at my house; being unexpected at your own. But, not to run the chance of any more such difficulties as you have had here, in case you should be recognised—though you 're a good deal changed; I think I might have passed you myself, Mr. Warden—we had better dine here, and walk on in the evening. It 's a very good place to dine at, Mr. Warden: your own property, by the bye. Self and Craggs (deceased) took a chop here sometimes, and had it very comfortably served. Mr. Craggs, sir,' said Snitchey, shutting his eyes tight for an instant, and opening them again, 'was struck off the roll of life too soon.'

'Heaven forgive me for not condoling with you,' returned Michael Warden, passing his hand across his forehead, 'but I 'm like a man in a dream at present. I seem to want my wits. Mr. Craggs—yes—I am very sorry we have lost Mr. Craggs.' But he looked at Clemency as he said it, and seemed to sympathise with Ben, consoling her.

'Mr. Craggs, sir,' observed Snitchey, 'didn't find life, I regret to say, as easy to have and to hold as his theory made it out, or

he would have been among us now. It 's a great loss to me. He was my right arm, my right leg, my right ear, my right eye, was Mr. Craggs. I am paralytic without him. He bequeathed his share of the business to Mrs. Craggs, her executors, administrators, and assigns. His name remains in the Firm to this hour. I try, in a childish sort of a way, to make believe, sometimes, he 's alive. You may observe that I speak for Self and Craggs—deceased, sir—deceased,' said the tender-hearted attorney, waving his pocket-handkerchief.

Michael Warden, who had still been observant of Clemency, turned to Mr. Snitchey when he ceased to speak, and whispered in his ear.

'Ah, poor thing!' said Snitchey, shaking his head. 'Yes. She was always very faithful to Marion. She was always very fond of her. Pretty Marion! Poor Marion! Cheer up, Mistress—you *are* married now, you know, Clemency.'

Clemency only sighed, and shook her head.

'Well, well! Wait till to-morrow,' said the lawyer kindly.

'To-morrow can't bring back the dead to life, Mister,' said Clemency, sobbing.

'No. It can't do that, or it would bring back Mr. Craggs, deceased,' returned the lawyer. 'But it may bring some soothing circumstances; it may bring some comfort. Wait till to-morrow!'

So Clemency, shaking his proffered hand, said she would; and, Britain, who had been terribly cast down at sight of his despondent wife (which was like the business hanging its head), said that was right; and Mr. Snitchey and Michael Warden went upstairs; and there they were soon engaged in a conversation so cautiously conducted, that no murmur of it was audible above the clatter of plates and dishes, the hissing of the frying-pan, the bubbling of saucepans, the low monotonous waltzing of the jack—with a dreadful click every now and then as if it had met with some mortal accident to its head, in a fit of giddiness—and all the other preparations in the kitchen for their dinner.

To-morrow was a bright and peaceful day; and nowhere were the autumn tints more beautifully seen, than from the quiet orchard of the Doctor's house. The snows of many winter nights

had melted from that ground, the withered leaves of many summer times had rustled there, since she had fled. The honeysuckle porch was green again, the trees cast bountiful and changing shadows on the grass, the landscape was as tranquil and serene as it had ever been; but where was she!

Not there. Not there. She would have been a stranger sight in her old home now, even than that home had been at first, without her. But, a lady sat in the familiar place, from whose heart she had never passed away; in whose true memory she lived, unchanging, youthful, radiant with all promise and all hope; in whose affection—and it was a mother's now, there was a cherished little daughter playing by her side—she had no rival, no successor; upon whose gentle lips her name was trembling then.

The spirit of the lost girl looked out of those eyes. Those eyes of Grace, her sister, sitting with her husband in the orchard, on their wedding-day, and his and Marion's birth-day.

He had not become a great man; he had not grown rich; he had not forgotten the scenes and friends of his youth; he had not fulfilled any one of the Doctor's old predictions. But, in his useful, patient, unknown visiting of poor men's homes; and in his watching of sick beds; and in his daily knowledge of the gentleness and goodness flowering the by-paths of this world, not to be trodden down beneath the heavy foot of poverty, but springing up, elastic, in its track, and making its way beautiful; he had better learned and proved, in each succeeding year, the truth of his old faith. The manner of his life, though quiet and remote, had shown him how often men still entertained angels, unawares, as in the olden time; and how the most unlikely forms—even some that were mean and ugly to the view, and poorly clad—became irradiated by the couch of sorrow, want, and pain, and changed to minstering spirits with a glory round their heads.

He lived to better purpose on the altered battle-ground perhaps, than if he had contended restlessly in more ambitious lists; and he was happy with his wife, dear Grace.

And Marion. Had *he* forgotten her?

'The time has flown, dear Grace,' he said, 'since then'; they had been talking of that night; 'and yet it seems a long long while ago. We count by changes and events within us. Not by years.'

'Yet we have years to count by, too, since Marion was with us,' returned Grace. 'Six times, dear husband, counting to-night as one, we have sat here on her birth-day, and spoken together of that happy return, so eagerly expected and so long deferred. Ah when will it be! When will it be!'

Her husband attentively observed her, as the tears collected in her eyes; and drawing nearer, said:

'But, Marion told you, in that farewell letter which she left for you upon your table, love, and which you read so often, that years must pass away before it *could* be. Did she not?'

She took a letter from her breast, and kissed it, and said 'Yes.'

'That through these intervening years, however happy she might be, she would look forward to the time when you would meet again, and all would be made clear; and that she prayed you, trustfully and hopefully to do the same. The letter runs so, does it not, my dear?'

'Yes, Alfred.'

'And every other letter she has written since?'

'Except the last—some months ago—in which she spoke of you, and what you then knew, and what I was to learn to-night.'

He looked towards the sun, then fast declining, and said that the appointed time was sunset.

'Alfred!' said Grace, laying her hand upon his shoulder earnestly, 'there is something in this letter—this old letter, which you say I read so often—that I have never told you. But, to-night, dear husband, with that sunset drawing near, and all our life seeming to soften and become hushed with the departing day, I cannot keep it secret.'

'What is it, love?'

'When Marion went away, she wrote me, here, that you had once left her a sacred trust to me, and that now she left you, Alfred, such a trust in my hands: praying and beseeching me, as I loved her, and as I loved you, not to reject the affection she believed (she knew, she said) you would transfer to me when the new wound was healed, but to encourage and return it.'

'—And make me a proud, and happy man again, Grace. Did she say so?'

'She meant, to make myself so blest and honoured in your love,' was his wife's answer, as he held her in his arms.

'Hear me, my dear!' he said.—'No. Hear me so!'—and as he spoke, he gently laid the head she had raised, again upon his shoulder. 'I know why I have never heard this passage in the letter, until now. I know why no trace of it ever showed itself in any word or look of yours at that time. I know why Grace, although so true a friend to me, was hard to win to be my wife. And knowing it, my own! I know the priceless value of the heart I gird within my arms, and thank God for the rich possession!'

She wept, but not for sorrow, as he pressed her to his heart. After a brief space, he looked down at the child, who was sitting at their feet playing with a little basket of flowers, and bade her look how golden and how red the sun was.

'Alfred,' said Grace, raising her head quickly at these words. 'The sun is going down. You have not forgotten what I am to know before it sets.'

'You are to know the truth of Marion's history, my love,' he answered.

'All the truth,' she said, imploringly. 'Nothing veiled from me, any more. That was the promise. Was it not?'

'It was,' he answered.

'Before the sun went down on Marion's birth-day. And you see it, Alfred? It is sinking fast.'

He put his arm about her waist, and, looking steadily into her eyes, rejoined:

'That truth is not reserved so long for me to tell, dear Grace. It is to come from other lips.'

'From other lips!' she faintly echoed.

'Yes. I know your constant heart, I know how brave you are, I know that to you a word of preparation is enough. You have said, truly, that the time is come. It is. Tell me that you have present fortitude to bear a trial—a surprise—a shock: and the messenger is waiting at the gate.'

'What messenger?' she said. 'And what intelligence does he bring?'

'I am pledged,' he answered her, preserving his steady look, 'to say no more. Do you think you understand me?'

'I am afraid to think,' she said.

There was that emotion in his face, despite its steady gaze, which frightened her. Again she hid her own face on his shoulder, trembling, and entreated him to pause—a moment.

'Courage, my wife! When you have firmness to receive the messenger, the messenger is waiting at the gate. The sun is setting on Marion's birth-day. Courage, courage, Grace!'

She raised her head, and, looking at him, told him she was ready. As she stood, and looked upon him going away, her face was so like Marion's as it had been in her later days at home, that it was wonderful to see. He took the child with him. She called her back—she bore the lost girl's name—and pressed her to her bosom. The little creature, being released again, sped after him, and Grace was left alone.

She knew not what she dreaded, or what hoped; but remained there, motionless, looking at the porch by which they had disappeared

Ah! what was that, emerging from its shadow; standing on its threshold! That figure, with its white garments rustling in the evening air; its head laid down upon her father's breast, and pressed against it to his loving heart! O God! was it a vision that came bursting from the old man's arms, and with a cry, and with a waving of its hands, and with a wild precipitation of itself upon her in its boundless love, sank down in her embrace!

'Oh, Marion, Marion! Oh, my sister! Oh, my heart's dear love! Oh, joy and happiness unutterable, so to meet again!'

It was no dream, no phantom conjured up by hope and fear, but Marion, sweet Marion! So beautiful, so happy, so unalloyed by care and trial, so elevated and exalted in her loveliness, that as the setting sun shone brightly on her upturned face, she might have been a spirit visiting the earth upon some healing mission.

Clinging to her sister, who had dropped upon a seat and bent down over her—and smiling through her tears—and kneeling, close before her, with both arms twining round her, and never turning for an instant from her face—and with the glory of the setting sun upon her brow, and with the soft tranquillity of evening gathering around them—Marion at length broke silence; her voice, so calm, low, clear, and pleasant, well-tuned to the time.

'When this was my dear home, Grace, as it will be now again—'

'Stay, my sweet love! A moment! O Marion, to hear you speak again.'

She could not bear the voice she loved so well, at first.

'When this was my dear home, Grace, as it will be now again, I loved him from my soul. I loved him most devotedly. I would have died for him, though I was so young. I never slighted his affection in my secret breast for one brief instant. It was far beyond all price to me. Although it is so long ago, and past, and gone, and everything is wholly changed, I could not bear to think that you, who love so well, should think I did not truly love him once. I never loved him better, Grace, than when he left this very scene upon this very day. I never loved him better, dear one, than I did that night when *I* left here.'

Her sister, bending over her, could look into her face, and hold her fast.

'But he had gained, unconsciously,' said Marion, with a gentle smile, 'another heart, before I knew that I had one to give him. That heart—yours, my sister!—was so yielded up, in all its other tenderness, to me; was so devoted, and so noble; that it plucked its love away, and kept its secret from all eyes but mine—Ah! what other eyes were quickened by such tenderness and gratitude! —and was content to sacrifice itself to me. But, I knew something of its depths. I knew the struggle it had made. I knew its high, inestimable worth to him, and his appreciation of it, let him love me as he would. I knew the debt I owed it. I had its great example every day before me. What you had done for me, I knew that I could do, Grace, if I would, for you. I never laid my head down on my pillow, but I prayed with tears to do it. I never laid my head down on my pillow, but I thought of Alfred's own words on the day of his departure, and how truly he had said (for I knew that, knowing you) that there were victories gained every day, in struggling hearts, to which these fields of battle were as nothing. Thinking more and more upon the great endurance cheerfully sustained, and never known or cared for, that there must be, every day and hour, in that great strife of which he spoke, my trial seemed to grow light and easy. And He who knows our hearts, my dearest, at this moment, and who knows

there is no drop of bitterness or grief—of anything but unmixed happiness—in mine, enabled me to make the resolution that I never would be Alfred's wife. That he should be my brother, and your husband, if the course I took could bring that happy end to pass; but that I never would (Grace, I then loved him dearly!) be his wife!'

'O Marion! O Marion!'

'I had tried to seem indifferent to him'; and she pressed her sister's face against her own; 'but that was hard, and you were always his true advocate. I had tried to tell you of my resolution, but you would never hear me; you would never understand me. The time was drawing near for his return. I felt that I must act, before the daily intercourse between us was renewed. I knew that one great pang, undergone at that time, would save a lengthened agony to all of us. I knew that if I went away then, that end must follow which *has* followed, and which has made us both so happy, Grace! I wrote to good Aunt Martha, for a refuge in her house: I did not then tell her all, but something of my story, and she freely promised it. While I was contesting that step with myself, and with my love of you, and home, Mr. Warden, brought here by an accident, became, for some time, our companion.'

'I have sometimes feared of late years, that this might have been,' exclaimed her sister; and her countenance was ashy-pale. 'You never loved him—and you married him in your self-sacrifice to me!'

'He was then,' said Marion, drawing her sister closer to her, 'on the eve of going secretly away for a long time. He wrote to me, after leaving here; told me what his condition and prospects really were; and offered me his hand. He told me he had seen I was not happy in the prospect of Alfred's return. I believe he thought my heart had no part in that contract; perhaps thought I might have loved him once, and did not then; perhaps thought that when I tried to seem indifferent, I tried to hide indifference —I cannot tell. But I wished that you should feel me wholly lost to Alfred—hopeless to him—dead. Do you understand me, love?'

Her sister looked into her face, attentively. She seemed in doubt.

'I saw Mr. Warden, and confided in his honour; charged him

with my secret, on the eve of his and my departure. He kept it. Do you understand me, dear?'

Grace looked confusedly upon her. She scarcely seemed to hear.

'My love, my sister!' said Marion, 'recall your thoughts a moment; listen to me. Do not look so strangely on me. There are countries, dearest, where those who would abjure a misplaced passion, or would strive against some cherished feeling of their hearts and conquer it, retire into a hopeless solitude, and close the world against themselves and worldly loves and hopes for ever. When women do so, they assume that name which is so dear to you and me, and call each other Sisters. But, there may be sisters, Grace, who, in the broad world out of doors, and underneath its free sky, and in its crowded places, and among its busy life, and trying to assist and cheer it and to do some good,—learn the same lesson; and who, with hearts still fresh and young, and open to all happiness and means of happiness, can say the battle is long past, the victory long won. And such a one am I! You understand me now?'

Still she looked fixedly upon her, and made no reply.

'Oh Grace, dear Grace,' said Marion, clinging yet more tenderly and fondly to that breast from which she had been so long exiled, 'if you were not a happy wife and mother—if I had no little namesake here—if Alfred, my kind brother, were not your own fond husband—from whence could I derive the ecstasy I feel to-night! But, as I left here, so I have returned. My heart has known no other love, my hand has never been bestowed apart from it. I am still your maiden sister, unmarried, unbetrothed: your own old loving Marion, in whose affection you exist alone and have no partner, Grace!'

She understood her now. Her face relaxed; sobs came to her relief; and falling on her neck, she wept and wept, and fondled her as if she were a child again.

When they were more composed, they found that the Doctor, and his sister good Aunt Martha, were standing near at hand, with Alfred.

'This is a weary day for me,' said good Aunt Martha, smiling through her tears, as she embraced her nieces; 'for I lose my dear

companion in making you all happy; and what can you give me, in return for my Marion?'

'A converted brother,' said the Doctor.

'That 's something, to be sure,' retorted Aunt Martha, 'in such a farce as—'

'No, pray don't,' said the Doctor penitently.

'Well, I won't,' replied Aunt Martha. 'But, I consider myself ill used. I don't know what 's to become of me without my Marion, after we have lived together half a dozen years.'

'You must come and live here, I suppose,' replied the Doctor. 'We shan't quarrel now, Martha.'

'Or you must get married, Aunt,' said Alfred.

'Indeed,' returned the old lady, 'I think it might be a good speculation if I were to set my cap at Michael Warden, who, I hear, is come home much the better for his absence in all respects. But as I knew him when he was a boy, and I was not a very young woman then, perhaps he mightn't respond. So I 'll make up my mind to go and live with Marion, when she marries, and until then (it will not be very long, I dare say) to live alone. What do *you* say, Brother?'

'I 've a great mind to say it 's a ridiculous world altogether, and there 's nothing serious in it,' observed the poor old Doctor.

'You might take twenty affidavits of it if you chose, Anthony,' said his sister; 'but nobody would believe you with such eyes as those.'

'It 's a world full of hearts,' said the Doctor, hugging his younger daughter, and bending across her to hug Grace—for he couldn't separate the sisters; 'and a serious world, with all its folly—ever with mine, which was enough to have swamped the whole globe; and it is a world on which the sun never rises, but it looks upon a thousand bloodless battles that are some set-off against the miseries and wickedness of Battle-Fields; and it is a world we need be careful how we libel, Heaven forgive us, for it is a world of sacred mysteries, and its Creator only knows what lies beneath the surface of His lightest image!'

You would not be the better pleased with my rude pen, if it dissected and laid open to your view the transports of this family,

long severed and now reunited. Therefore, I will not follow the poor Doctor through his humbled recollection of the sorrow he had had, when Marion was lost to him; nor, will I tell how serious he had found that world to be, in which some love, deep-anchored, is the portion of all human creatures; nor, how such a trifle as the absence of one little unit in the great absurd account, had stricken him to the ground. Nor, how, in compassion for his distress, his sister had, long ago, revealed the truth to him by slow degrees, and brought him to the knowledge of the heart of his self-banished daughter, and to that daughter's side.

Nor, how Alfred Heathfield had been told the truth, too, in the course of that then current year; and Marion had seen him, and had promised him, as her brother, that on her birth-day, in the evening, Grace should know it from her lips at last.

'I beg your pardon, Doctor,' said Mr. Snitchey, looking into the orchard, 'but have I liberty to come in?'

Without waiting for permission, he came straight to Marion, and kissed her hand, quite joyfully.

'If Mr. Craggs had been alive, my dear Miss Marion,' said Mr. Snitchey, 'he would have had great interest in this occasion. It might have suggested to him, Mr. Alfred, that our life is not too easy perhaps; that, taken altogether, it will bear any little smoothing we can give it; but Mr. Craggs was a man who could endure to be convinced, sir. He was always open to conviction. If he were open to conviction, now, I—this is weakness. Mrs. Snitchey, my dear,'—at his summons that lady appeared from behind the door, 'you are among old friends.'

Mrs. Snitchey having delivered her congratulations, took her husband aside.

'One moment, Mr. Snitchey,' said that lady. 'It is not in my nature to rake up the ashes of the departed.'

'No, my dear,' returned her husband.

'Mr. Craggs is—'

'Yes, my dear, he is deceased,' said Mr. Snitchey.

'But I ask you if you recollect,' pursued his wife, 'that evening of the ball? I only ask you that. If you do; and if your memory has not entirely failed you, Mr. Snitchey; and if you are not absolutely in your dotage; I ask you to connect this time

with that—to remember how I begged and prayed you, on my knees—'

'Upon your knees, my dear?' said Mr. Snitchey.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Snitchey, confidently, 'and you know it—to beware of that man—to observe his eye—and now to tell me whether I was right, and whether at that moment he knew secrets which he didn't choose to tell.'

'Mrs. Snitchey,' returned her husband, in her ear, 'Madam. Did you ever observe anything in *my* eye?'

'No,' said Mrs. Snitchey, sharply. 'Don't flatter yourself.'

'Because, Madam, that night,' he continued, twitching her by the sleeve, 'it happens that we both knew secrets which we didn't choose to tell, and both knew just the same professionally. And so the less you say about such things the better, Mrs. Snitchey; and take this as a warning to have wiser and more charitable eyes another time. Miss Marion, I brought a friend of yours along with me. Here! Mistress!'

Poor Clemency, with her apron to her eyes, came slowly in, escorted by her husband; the latter doleful with the presentiment, that if she abandoned herself to grief, the Nutmeg-Grater was done for.

'Now, Mistress,' said the lawyer, checking Marion as she ran towards her, and interposing himself between them, 'what 's the matter with *you*?'

'The matter,' cried poor Clemency.—When, looking up in wonder, and in indignant remonstrance, and in the added emotion of a great roar from Mr. Britain, and seeing that sweet face so well-remembered close before her, she stared, sobbed, laughed, cried, screamed, embraced her, held her fast, released her, fell on Mr. Snitchey and embraced him (much to Mrs. Snitchey's indignation), fell on the Doctor and embraced him, fell on Mr. Britain and embraced him, and concluded by embracing herself, throwing her apron over her head, and going into hysterics behind it.

A stranger had come into the orchard, after Mr. Snitchey, and had remained apart, near the gate, without being observed by any of the group; for they had little spare attention to bestow, and that had been monopolised by the ecstasies of Clemency. He did not appear to wish to be observed, but stood alone, with down-

cast eyes; and there was an air of dejection about him (though he was a gentleman of a gallant appearance) which the general happiness rendered more remarkable.

None but the quick eyes of Aunt Martha, however, remarked him at all; but, almost as soon as she espied him, she was in conversation with him. Presently, going to where Marion stood with Grace and her little namesake, she whispered something in Marion's ear, at which she started, and appeared surprised; but soon recovering from her confusion she timidly approached the stranger, in Aunt Martha's company, and engaged in conversation with him too.

'Mr. Britain,' said the lawyer, putting his hand in his pocket, and bringing out a legal-looking document, while this was going on, 'I congratulate you. You are now the whole and sole proprietor of that freehold tenement, at present occupied and held by yourself as a licensed tavern, or house of public entertainment, and commonly called or known by the sign of the Nutmeg-Grater. Your wife lost one house, through my client Mr. Michael Warden; and now gains another. I shall have the pleasure of canvassing you for the county, one of these fine mornings.'

'Would it make any difference in the vote if the sign was altered, sir?' asked Britain.

'Not in the least,' replied the lawyer.

'Then,' said Mr. Britain, handing him back the conveyance, 'just clap in the words, "and Thimble," will you be so good; and I 'll have the two mottoes painted up in the parlour instead of my wife's portrait.'

'And let me,' said a voice behind them; it was the stranger's—Michael Warden's; 'let me claim the benefit of those inscriptions. Mr. Heathfield and Dr. Jeddler, I might have deeply wronged you both. That I did not, is no virtue of my own. I will not say that I am six years wiser than I was, or better. But I have known, at any rate, that term of self-reproach. I can urge no reason why you should deal gently with me. I abused the hospitality of this house; and learnt by my own demerits, with a shame I never have forgotten, yet with some profit too I would fain hope, from one,' he glanced at Marion, 'to whom I made my humble supplication for forgiveness, when I knew her merit and

my deep unworthiness. In a few days I shall quit this place for ever. I entreat your pardon. Do as you would be done by! Forget and Forgive!'

Time—from whom I had the latter portion of this story, and with whom I have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance of some five-and-thirty years' duration—informed me, leaning easily upon his scythe, that Michael Warden never went away again, and never sold his house, but opened it afresh, maintained a golden mean of hospitality, and had a wife, the pride and honour of that country-side, whose name was Marion. But, as I have observed that Time confuses facts occasionally, I hardly know what weight to give to its authority.

THE PERILS OF CERTAIN ENGLISH PRISONERS

[1857]

THE PERILS OF CERTAIN ENGLISH PRISONERS

CHAPTER I

THE ISLAND OF SILVER-STORE

It was in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty-four, that I, Gill Davis to command, His Mark, having then the honour to be a private in the Royal Marines, stood a-leaning over the bulwarks of the armed sloop Christopher Columbus, in the South American waters off the Mosquito shore.

My lady remarks to me, before I go any further, that there is no such christian-name as Gill, and that her confident opinion is, that the name given to me in the baptism wherein I was made, etc., was Gilbert. She is certain to be right, but I never heard of it. I was a foundling child, picked up somewhere or another, and I always understood my christian-name to be Gill. It is true that I was called Gills when employed at Snorridge Bottom betwixt Chatham and Maidstone to frighten birds; but that had nothing to do with the Baptism wherein I was made, etc., and wherein a number of things were promised for me by somebody, who let me alone ever afterwards as to performing any of them, and who, I consider, must have been the Beadle. Such name of Gills was entirely owing to my cheeks, or gills, which at that time of life were of a raspy description.

My lady stops me again, before I go any further, by laughing exactly in her old way and waving the feather of her pen at me. That action on her part calls to my mind as I look at her hand with the rings on it—Well! I won't! To be sure it will come in, in its own place. But it 's always strange to me, noticing the quiet

hand, and noticing it (as I have done, you know, so many times) a-fondling children and grandchildren asleep, to think that when blood and honour were up—there! I won't! not at present!—Scratch it out.

She won't scratch it out, and quite honourable; because we have made an understanding that everything is to be taken down, and that nothing that is once taken down shall be scratched out. I have the great misfortune not to be able to read and write, and I am speaking my true and faithful account of those Adventures, and my lady is writing it, word for word.

I say, there I was, a-leaning over the bulwarks of the sloop Christopher Columbus in the South American waters off the Mosquito shore: a subject of his Gracious Majesty King George of England, and a private in the Royal Marines.

In those climates, you don't want to do much. I was doing nothing. I was thinking of the shepherd (my father, I wonder?) on the hill-sides by Snorridge Bottom, with a long staff, and with a rough white coat in all weathers all the year round, who used to let me lie in a corner of his hut by night, and who used to let me go about with him and his sheep by day when I could get nothing else to do, and who used to give me so little of his victuals and so much of his staff, that I ran away from him—which was what he wanted all along, I expect—to be knocked about the world in preference to Snorridge Bottom. I had been knocked about the world for nine-and-twenty years in all, when I stood looking along those bright blue South American Waters. Looking after the shepherd, I may say. Watching him in a half-waking dream, with my eyes half-shut, as he, and his flock of sheep, and his two dogs, seemed to move away from the ship's side, far away over the blue water, and go right down into the sky.

'It 's rising out of the water, steady,' a voice said close to me. I had been thinking on so, that it like woke me with a start, though it was no stranger voice than the voice of Harry Charker, my own comrade.

'What 's rising out of the water, steady?' I asked my comrade.

'What?' says he. 'The Island.'

'O! The Island!' says I, turning my eyes towards it. 'True. I forgot the Island.'

'Forgot the port you 're going to? That 's odd, ain't it?'

'It is odd,' says I.

'And odd,' he said, slowly considering with himself, 'ain't even. Is it, Gill?'

He had always a remark just like that to make, and seldom another. As soon as he had brought a thing round to what it was not, he was satisfied. He was one of the best of men, and, in a certain sort of a way, one with the least to say for himself. I qualify it, because, besides being able to read and write like a Quarter-master, he had always one most excellent idea in his mind. That was, Duty. Upon my soul, I don't believe, though I admire learning beyond everything, that he could have got a better idea out of all the books in the world, if he had learnt them every word, and been the cleverest of scholars.

My comrade and I had been quartered in Jamaica, and from there we had been drafted off to the British settlement of Belize, lying away West and North of the Mosquito coast. At Belize there had been great alarm of one cruel gang of pirates (there were always more pirates than enough in those Caribbean Seas), and as they got the better of our English cruisers by running into out-of-the-way creeks and shallows, and taking the land when they were hotly pressed, the governor of Belize had received orders from home to keep a sharp look-out for them along shore. Now, there was an armed sloop came once a-year from Port Royal, Jamaica, to the Island, laden with all manner of necessaries, to eat, and to drink, and to wear, and to use in various ways; and it was aboard of that sloop which had touched at Belize, that I was a-standing, leaning over the bulwarks.

The Island was occupied by a very small English colony. It had been given the name of Silver-Store. The reason of its being so called, was, that the English colony owned and worked a silver mine over on the mainland, in Honduras, and used this Island as a safe and convenient place to store their silver in, until it was annually fetched away by the sloop. It was brought down from the mine to the coast on the backs of mules, attended by friendly Indians and guarded by white men; from thence it was conveyed

over to Silver-Store, when the weather was fair, in the canoes of that country; from Silver-Store, it was carried to Jamaica by the armed sloop once a-year, as I have already mentioned; from Jamaica, it went, of course, all over the world.

How I came to be aboard the armed sloop, is easily told. Four-and-twenty marines under command of a lieutenant—that officer's name was Linderwood—had been told off at Belize, to proceed to Silver-Store, in aid of boats and seamen stationed there for the chase of the Pirates. The Island was considered a good post of observation against the pirates, both by land and sea; neither the pirate ship nor yet her boats had been seen by any of us, but they had been so much heard of, that the reinforcement was sent. Of that party, I was one. It included a corporal and a sergeant. Charker was corporal, and the sergeant's name was Drooce. He was the most tyrannical non-commissioned officer in His Majesty's service.

The night came on, soon after I had had the foregoing words with Charker. All the wonderful bright colours went out of the sea and sky in a few minutes, and all the stars in the Heavens seemed to shine out together, and to look down at themselves in the sea, over one another's shoulders, millions deep. Next morning, we cast anchor off the Island. There was a snug harbour within a little reef; there was a sandy beach; there were cocoa-nut trees with high straight stems, quite bare, and foliage at the top like plumes of magnificent green feathers; there were all the objects that are usually seen in those parts, and I am not going to describe them, having something else to tell about.

Great rejoicings, to be sure, were made on our arrival. All the flags in the place were hoisted, all the guns in the place were fired, and all the people in the place came down to look at us. One of those Sambo fellows—they call those natives Sambos, when they are half-negro and half-Indian—had come off outside the reef, to pilot us in, and remained on board after we had let go our anchor. He was called Christian George King, and was fonder of all hands than anybody else was. Now, I confess, for myself, that on that first day, if I had been captain of the Christopher Columbus, instead of private in the Royal Marines, I should have kicked Christian George King—who was no more a Christian

than he was a King or a George—over the side, without exactly knowing why, except that it was the right thing to do.

But, I must likewise confess, that I was not in a particularly pleasant humour, when I stood under arms that morning, aboard the Christopher Columbus in the harbour of the Island of Silver-Store. I had had a hard life, and the life of the English on the Island seemed too easy and too gay to please me. 'Here you are,' I thought to myself, 'good scholars and good livers; able to read what you like, able to write what you like, able to eat and drink what you like, and spend what you like, and do what you like; and much *you* care for a poor, ignorant Private in the Royal Marines! Yet it 's hard, too, I think, that you should have all the halfpence, and I all the kicks; you all the smooth, and I all the rough; you all the oil, and I all the vinegar.' It was as envious a thing to think as might be, let alone its being nonsensical; but, I thought it. I took it so much amiss, that, when a very beautiful young English lady came aboard, I grunted to myself, 'Ah! *you* have got a lover, I 'll be bound!' As if there was any new offence to me in that, if she had!

She was sister to the captain of our sloop, who had been in a poor way for some time, and who was so ill then that he was obliged to be carried ashore. She was the child of a military officer, and had come out there with her sister, who was married to one of the owners of the silver-mine, and who had three children with her. It was easy to see that she was the light and spirit of the Island. After I had got a good look at her, I grunted to myself again, in an even worse state of mind than before, 'I 'll be damned, if I don't hate him, whoever he is!'

My officer, Lieutenant Linderwood, was as ill as the captain of the sloop, and was carried ashore, too. They were both young men of about my age, who had been delicate in the West India climate. I even took *that* in bad part. I thought I was much fitter for the work than they were, and that if all of us had our deserts, I should be both of them rolled into one. (It may be imagined what sort of an officer of marines I should have made, without the power of reading a written order. And as to any knowledge how to command the sloop—Lord! I should have sunk her in a quarter of an hour!)

However, such were my reflections; and when we men were ashore and dismissed, I strolled about the place along with Charker, making my observations in a similar spirit.

It was a pretty place: in all its arrangements partly South American and partly English, and very agreeable to look at on that account, being like a bit of home that got chipped off and had floated away to that spot, accommodating itself to circumstances as it drifted along. The huts of the Sambos, to the number of five-and-twenty, perhaps, were down by the beach to the left of the anchorage. On the right was a sort of barrack, with a South American Flag and the Union Jack, flying from the same staff, where the little English colony could all come together, if they saw occasion. It was a walled square of building, with a sort of pleasure-ground inside, and inside that again a sunken block like a powder magazine, with a little square trench round it, and steps down to the door. Charker and I were looking in at the gate, which was not guarded; and I had said to Charker, in reference to the bit like a powder magazine, 'That 's where they keep the silver you see'; and Charker had said to me, after thinking it over, 'And silver ain't gold. Is it, Gill?' when the beautiful young English lady I had been so bilious about, looked out of a door, or a window—at all events looked out, from under a bright awning. She no sooner saw us two in uniform, than she came out so quickly that she was still putting on her broad Mexican hat of plaited straw when we saluted.

'Would you like to come in,' she said, 'and see the place? It is rather a curious place.'

We thanked the young lady, and said we didn't wish to be troublesome; but, she said it could be no trouble to an English soldier's daughter, to show English soldiers how their countrymen and countrywomen fared, so far away from England; and consequently we saluted again, and went in. Then, as we stood in the shade, she showed us (being as affable as beautiful), how the different families lived in their separate houses, and how there was a general house for stores, and a general reading-room, and a general room for music and dancing, and a room for Church; and how there were other houses on the rising ground called the Signal Hill, where they lived in the hotter weather.

'Your officer has been carried up there,' she said, 'and my brother, too, for the better air. At present, our few residents are dispersed over both spots: deducting, that is to say, such of our number as are always going to, or coming from, or staying at, the Mine.'

('*He* is among one of those parties,' I thought, 'and I wish somebody would knock his head off.')

'Some of our married ladies live here,' she said, 'during at least half the year, as lonely as widows, with their children.'

'Many children here, ma'am?'

'Seventeen. There are thirteen married ladies, and there are eight like me.'

There were not eight like her—there was not one like her—in the world. She meant single.

'Which, with about thirty Englishmen of various degrees,' said the young lady, 'form the little colony now on the Island. I don't count the sailors, for they don't belong to us. Nor the soldiers,' she gave us a gracious smile when she spoke of the soldiers, 'for the same reason.'

'Nor the Sambos, ma'am,' said I.

'No.'

'Under your favour, and with your leave, ma'am,' said I, 'are they trustworthy?'

'Perfectly! We are all very kind to them, and they are very grateful to us.'

'Indeed, ma'am? Now—Christian George King—?'

'Very much attached to us all. Would die for us.'

She was, as in my uneducated way I have observed very beautiful women almost always to be, so composed, that her composure gave great weight to what she said, and I believed it.

Then, she pointed out to us the building like a powder magazine, and explained to us in what manner the silver was brought from the mine, and was brought over from the mainland, and was stored there. The Christopher Columbus would have a rich lading, she said, for there had been a great yield that year, a much richer yield than usual, and there was a chest of jewels besides the silver.

When we had looked about us, and were getting sheepish,

through fearing we were troublesome, she turned us over to a young woman, English born but West India bred, who served her as her maid. This young woman was the widow of a non-commissioned officer in a regiment of the line. She had got married and widowed at St. Vincent, with only a few months between the two events. She was a little saucy woman, with a bright pair of eyes, rather a neat little foot and figure, and rather a neat little turned-up nose. The sort of young woman, I considered at the time, who appeared to invite you to give her a kiss, and who would have slapped your face if you accepted the invitation.

I couldn't make out her name at first; for, when she gave it in answer to my inquiry, it sounded like Beltot, which didn't sound right. But, when we became better acquainted—which was while Charker and I were drinking sugar-cane sangaree, which she made in a most excellent manner—I found that her Christian name was Isabella, which they shortened into Bell, and that the name of the deceased non-commissioned officer was Tott. Being the kind of neat little woman it was natural to make a toy of—I never saw a woman so like a toy in my life—she had got the plaything name of Belltott. In short, she had no other name on the island. Even Mr. Commissioner Pordage (and *he* was a grave one!) formally addressed her as Mrs. Belltott. But, I shall come to Mr. Commissioner Pordage presently.

The name of the captain of the sloop was Captain Maryon, and therefore it was no news to hear from Mrs. Belltott, that his sister, the beautiful unmarried young English lady, was Miss Maryon. The novelty was, that her Christian name was Marion too. Marion Maryon. Many a time I have run off those two names in my thoughts, like a bit of verse. Oh many, and many, and many a time!

We saw out all the drink that was produced, like good men and true, and then took our leaves, and went down to the beach. The weather was beautiful; the wind steady, low, and gentle; the island, a picture; the sea, a picture; the sky, a picture. In that country there are two rainy seasons in the year. One sets in at about our English Midsummer; the other, about a fortnight after our English Michaelmas. It was the beginning of August at that time; the first of these rainy seasons was well over; and every

thing was in its most beautiful growth, and had its loveliest look upon it.

'They enjoy themselves here,' I says to Charker, turning surly again. 'This is better than private-soldiering.'

We had come down to the beach, to be friendly with the boat's-crew who were camped and hutted there; and we were approaching towards their quarters over the sand, when Christian George King comes up from the landing-place at a wolf's-trot, crying, 'Yup, So-Jeer!'—which was that Sambo Pilot's barbarous way of saying, Hallo, Soldier! I have stated myself to be a man of no learning, and, if I entertain prejudices, I hope allowance may be made. I will now confess to one. It may be a right one or it may be a wrong one; but, I never did like Natives, except in the form of oysters.

So, when Christian George King, who was individually unpleasant to me besides, comes a trotting along the sand, clucking, 'Yup, So-Jeer!' I had a thundering good mind to let fly at him with my right. I certainly should have done it, but that it would have exposed me to reprimand.

'Yup, So-Jeer!' says he. 'Bad job.'

'What do you mean?' says I.

'Yup, So-Jeer!' says he, 'Ship Leakee.'

'Ship leaky?' says I.

'Iss,' says he, with a nod that looked as if it was jerked out of him by a most violent hiccup—which is the way with those savages.

I cast my eyes at Charker, and we both heard the pumps going aboard the sloop, and saw the signal run up, 'Come on board; hands wanted from the shore.' In no time some of the sloop's liberty-men were already running down to the water's edge, and the party of seamen, under orders against the Pirates, were putting off to the Columbus in two boats.

'O Christian George King sar berry sorry!' says that Sambo vagabond, then. 'Christian George King cry, English fashion!' His English fashion of crying was to screw his black knuckles into his eyes, howl like a dog, and roll himself on his back on the sand. It was trying not to kick him, but I gave Charker the word,

'Double-quick, Harry!' and we got down to the water's edge, and got on board the sloop.

By some means or other, she had sprung such a leak, that no pumping would keep her free; and what between the two fears that she would go down in the harbour, and that, even if she did not, all the supplies she had brought for the little colony would be destroyed by the sea-water as it rose in her, there was great confusion. In the midst of it, Captain Maryon was heard hailing from the beach. He had been carried down in his hammock, and looked very bad; but he insisted on being stood there on his feet; and I saw him, myself, come off in the boat, sitting upright in the stern-sheets, as if nothing was wrong with him.

A quick sort of council was held, and Captain Maryon soon resolved that we must all fall to work to get the cargo out, and that when that was done, the guns and heavy matters must be got out, and that the sloop must be hauled ashore and careened, and the leak stopped. We were all mustered (the Pirate-Chace party volunteering), and told off into parties, with so many hours of spell and so many hours of relief, and we all went at it with a will. Christian George King was entered one of the party in which I worked, at his own request, and he went at it with as good a will as any of the rest. He went at it with so much heartiness, to say the truth, that he rose in my good opinion almost as fast as the water rose in the ship. Which was fast enough, and faster.

Mr. Commissioner Pordage kept in a red-and-black japanned box, like a family lump-sugar box, some document or other, which some Sambo chief or other had got drunk and spilt some ink over (as well as I could understand the matter), and by that means had given up lawful possession of the Island. Through having hold of this box, Mr. Pordage got his title of Commissioner. He was styled Consul too, and spoke of himself as 'Government.'

He was a stiff-jointed, high-nosed old gentleman, without an ounce of fat on him, of a very angry temper and a very yellow complexion. Mrs. Commissioner Pordage, making allowance for difference of sex, was much the same. Mr. Kitten, a small, youngish, bald, botanical and mineralogical gentleman, also connected with the mine—but everybody there was that, more or less—was sometimes called by Mr. Commissioner Pordage, his Vice-com-

missioner, and sometimes his Deputy-consul. Or sometimes he spoke of Mr. Kitten, merely as being 'under Government.'

The beach was beginning to be a lively scene with the preparations for careening the sloop, and, with cargo, and spars, and rigging, and water-casks, dotted about it, and with temporary quarters for the men rising up there out of such sails and odds and ends as could be best set on one side to make them, when Mr. Commissioner Pordage comes down in a high fluster, and asks for Captain Maryon. The Captain, ill as he was, was slung in his hammock betwixt two trees, that he might direct; and he raised his head, and answered for himself.

'Captain Maryon,' cries Mr. Commissioner Pordage, 'this is not official. This is not regular.'

'Sir,' says the Captain, 'it hath been arranged with the clerk and supercargo, that you should be communicated with, and requested to render any little assistance that may lie in your power. I am quite certain that hath been duly done.'

'Captain Maryon,' replies Mr. Commissioner Pordage, 'there hath been no written correspondence. No documents have passed, no memoranda have been made, no minutes have been made, no entries and counter-entries appear in the official muniments. This is indecent. I call upon you, sir, to desist, until all is regular, or Government will take this up.'

'Sir,' says Captain Maryon, chafing a little, as he looked out of his hammock; 'between the chances of Government taking this up, and my ship taking herself down, I much prefer to trust myself to the former.'

'You do, sir?' cries Mr. Commissioner Pordage.

'I do, sir,' says Captain Maryon, lying down again.

'Then, Mr. Kitten,' says the Commissioner, 'send up instantly for my Diplomatic coat.'

He was dressed in a linen suit at that moment; but, Mr. Kitten started off himself and brought down the Diplomatic coat, which was a blue cloth one, gold-laced, and with a crown on the button.

'Now, Mr. Kitten,' says Pordage, 'I instruct you, as Vice-commissioner, and Deputy-consul of this place to demand of Captain Maryon, of the sloop Christopher Columbus, whether he drives me to the act of putting this coat on?'

'Mr. Pordage,' says Captain Maryon, looking out of his hammock again, 'as I can hear what you say, I can answer it without troubling the gentleman. I should be sorry that you should be at the pains of putting on too hot a coat on my account; but, otherwise, you may put it on hind-side before, or inside-out, or with your legs in the sleeves, or your head in the skirts, for any objection that I have to offer to your thoroughly pleasing yourself.'

'Very good, Captain Maryon,' says Pordage, in a tremendous passion. 'Very good, sir. Be the consequences on your own head! Mr. Kitten, as it has come to this, help me on with it.'

When he had given that order, he walked off in the coat, and all our names were taken, and I was afterwards told that Mr. Kitten wrote from his dictation more than a bushel of large paper on the subject, which cost more before it was done with, than ever could be calculated, and which only got done with after all, by being lost.

Our work went on merrily, nevertheless, and the Christopher Columbus, hauled up, lay helpless on her side like a great fish out of water. While she was in that state, there was a feast, or a ball, or an entertainment, or more properly all three together, given us in honour of the ship, and the ship's company, and the other visitors. At that assembly, I believe, I saw all the inhabitants then upon the Island, without any exception. I took no particular notice of more than a few, but I found it very agreeable in that little corner of the world to see the children, who were of all ages, and mostly very pretty—as they mostly are. There was one handsome elderly lady, with very dark eyes and gray hair, that I inquired about. I was told that her name was Mrs. Venning; and her married daughter, a fair, slight thing, was pointed out to me by the name of Fanny Fisher. Quite a child she looked, with a little copy of herself holding to her dress; and her husband, just come back from the mine, exceeding proud of her. They were a good-looking set of people on the whole, but I didn't like them. I was out of sorts; in conversation with Charker, I found fault with all of them. I said of Mrs. Venning, she was proud; of Mrs. Fisher, she was a delicate little baby-fool. What did I think of this one? Why, he was a fine gentleman. What did I say to that one? Why, she was a fine lady. What could you expect them to

be (I asked Charker), nursed in that climate, with the tropical night shining for them, musical instruments playing to them, great trees bending over them, soft lamps lighting them, fire-flies sparkling in among them, bright flowers and birds brought into existence to please their eyes, delicious drinks to be had for the pouring out, delicious fruit to be got for the picking, and every one dancing and murmuring happily in the scented air, with the sea breaking low on the reef for a pleasant chorus.

'Fine gentlemen and fine ladies, Harry?' I says to Charker. 'Yes, I think so! Dolls! Dolls! Not the sort of stuff for wear, that comes of poor private soldiering in the Royal Marines!'

However, I could not gainsay that they were very hospitable people, and that they treated us uncommonly well. Every man of us was at the entertainment, and Mrs. Belltott had more partners than she could dance with: though she danced all night, too. As to Jack (whether of the Christopher Columbus, or of the Pirate pursuit party, it made no difference), he danced with his brother Jack, danced with himself, danced with the moon, the stars, the trees, the prospect, anything. I didn't greatly take to the chief-officer of that party, with his bright eyes, brown face, and easy figure. I didn't much like his way when he first happened to come where we were, with Miss Maryon on his arm. 'O Captain Carton,' she says, 'here are two friends of mine!' He says, 'Indeed? These two Marines?'—meaning Charker and self. 'Yes,' says she, 'I showed these two friends of mine when they first came, all the wonders of Silver-Store.' He gave us a laughing look, and says he, 'You are in luck, men. I would be disrated and go before the mast to-morrow, to be shown the way upward again by such a guide. You are in luck, men.' When we had saluted, and he and the lady had waltzed away, I said, 'You are a pretty fellow, too, to talk of luck. You may go to the Devil!'

Mr. Commissioner Pordage and Mrs. Commissioner, showed among the company on that occasion like the King and Queen of a much Greater Britain than Great Britain. Only two other circumstances in that jovial night made much separate impression on me. One was this. A man in our draft of marines, named Tom Packer, a wild, unsteady young fellow, but the son of a respectable shipwright in Portsmouth Yard, and a good scholar who had

been well brought up, comes to me after a spell of dancing, and takes me aside by the elbow, and says, swearing angrily:

'Gill Davis, I hope I may not be the death of Sergeant Drooce one day!'

Now, I knew Drooce had always borne particularly hard on this man, and I knew this man to be of a very hot temper: so, I said:

'Tut, nonsense! don't talk so to me! If there 's a man in the corps who scorns the name of an assassin, that man and Tom Packer are one.'

Tom wipes his head, being in a mortal sweat, and says he:

'I hope so, but I can't answer for myself when he lords it over me, as he has just now done, before a woman. I tell you what, Gill! Mark my words! It will go hard with Sergeant Drooce, if ever we are in an engagement together, and he has to look to me to save him. Let him say a prayer then, if he knows one, for it 's all over with him, and he is on his Death-bed. Mark my words!'

I did mark his words, and very soon afterwards, too, as will shortly be taken down.

The other circumstance that I noticed at that ball, was, the gaiety and attachment of Christian George King. The innocent spirits that Sambo Pilot was in, and the impossibility he found himself under of showing all the little colony, but especially the ladies and children, how fond he was of them, how devoted to them, and how faithful to them for life and death, for present, future, and everlasting, made a great impression on me. If ever a man, Sambo or no Sambo, was trustful and trusted, to what may be called quite an infantine and sweetly beautiful extent, surely, I thought that morning when I did at last lie down to rest, it was that Sambo Pilot, Christian George King.

This may account for my dreaming of him. He stuck in my sleep, cornerwise, and I couldn't get him out. He was always flitting about me, dancing round me, and peeping in over my hammock, though I woke and dozed off again fifty times. At last, when I opened my eyes, there he really was, looking in at the open side of the little dark hut; which was made of leaves, and had Charker's hammock slung in it as well as mine.

'So-Jeer!' says he, in a sort of a low croak. 'Yup!'

'Hallo!' says I, starting up. 'What? You *are* there, are you?'

'Iss,' says he. 'Christian George King got news.'

'What news has he got?'

'Pirates out!'

I was on my feet in a second. So was Charker. We were both aware that Captain Carton, in command of the boats, constantly watched the mainland for a secret signal, though, of course, it was not known to such as us what the signal was.

Christian George King had vanished before we touched the ground. But, the word was already passing from hut to hut to turn out quietly, and we knew that the nimble barbarian had got hold of the truth, or something near it.

In a space among the trees behind the encampment of us visitors, naval and military, was a snugly-screened spot, where we kept the stores that were in use, and did our cookery. The word was passed to assemble here. It was very quickly given, and was given (so far as we were concerned) by Sergeant Drooce, who was as good in a soldier point of view, as he was bad in a tyrannical one. We were ordered to drop into this space, quietly, behind the trees, one by one. As we assembled here, the seamen assembled too. Within ten minutes, as I should estimate, we were all here, except the usual guard upon the beach. The beach (we could see it through the wood) looked as it always had done in the hottest time of the day. The guard were in the shadow of the sloop's hull, and nothing was moving but the sea, and that moved very faintly. Work had always been knocked off at that hour, until the sun grew less fierce, and the sea-breeze rose; so that its being holiday with us, made no difference, just then, in the look of the place. But I may mention that it was a holiday, and the first we had had since our hard work began. Last night's ball had been given, on the leak's being repaired, and the careening done. The worst of the work was over, and to-morrow we were to begin to get the sloop afloat again.

We marines were now drawn up here under arms. The chase-party were drawn up separate. The men of the Columbus were drawn up separate. The officers stepped out into the midst of the three parties, and spoke so as all might hear. Captain Carton was the officer in command, and he had a spy-glass in his hand. His

coxswain stood by him with another spy-glass, and with a slate on which he seemed to have been taking down signals.

'Now, men!' says Captain Carton; 'I have to let you know, for your satisfaction: Firstly, that there are ten pirate boats, strongly manned and armed, lying hidden up a creek yonder on the coast, under the overhanging branches of the dense trees. Secondly, that they will certainly come out this night when the moon rises, on a pillaging and murdering expedition, of which some part of the mainland is the object. Thirdly—don't cheer, men!—that we will give chase, and, if we can get at them, rid the world of them, please God!'

Nobody spoke, that I heard, and nobody moved, that I saw. Yet there was a kind of ring, as if every man answered and approved with the best blood that was inside of him.

'Sir,' says Captain Maryon, 'I beg to volunteer on this service, with my boats. My people volunteer, to the ship's boys.'

'In His Majesty's name and service,' the other answers, touching his hat, 'I accept your aid with pleasure. Lieutenant Linderwood, how will you divide your men?'

I was ashamed—I give it out to be written down as large and plain as possible—I was heart and soul ashamed of my thoughts of those two sick officers, Captain Maryon and Lieutenant Linderwood, when I saw them, then and there. The spirit in those two gentlemen beat down their illness (and very ill I knew them to be) like Saint George beating down the Dragon. Pain and weakness, want of ease and want of rest, had no more place in their minds than fear itself. Meaning now to express for my lady to write down, exactly what I felt then and there, I felt this: 'You two brave fellows that I had been so grudgeful of, I know that if you were dying you would put it off to get up and do your best, and then you would be so modest that in lying down again to die, you would hardly say, "I did it!"'

It did me good. It really did me good.

But, to go back to where I broke off. Says Captain Carton to Lieutenant Linderwood, 'Sir, how will you divide your men? There is not room for all; and a few men should, in any case, be left here.'

There was some debate about it. At last, it was resolved to

leave eight Marines and four seamen on the Island, besides the sloop's two boys. And because it was considered that the friendly Sambos would only want to be commanded in case of any danger (though none at all was apprehended there), the officers were in favour of leaving the two non-commissioned officers, Drooce and Charker. It was a heavy disappointment to them, just as my being one of the left was a heavy disappointment to me—then, but not soon afterwards. We men drew lots for it, and I drew 'Island.' So did Tom Packer. So, of course, did four more of our rank and file.

When this was settled, verbal instructions were given to all hands to keep the intended expedition secret, in order that the women and children might not be alarmed, or the expedition put in a difficulty by more volunteers. The assembly was to be on that same spot at sunset. Every man was to keep up an appearance, meanwhile, of occupying himself in his usual way. That is to say, every man excepting four old trusty seamen, who were appointed, with an officer, to see to the arms and ammunition, and to muffle the rullocks of the boats, and to make everything as trim and swift and silent as it could be made.

The Sambo Pilot had been present all the while, in case of his being wanted, and had said to the officer in command, five hundred times over if he had said it once, that Christian George King would stay with the So-Jeers, and take care of the booffer ladies and the booffer childs—booffer being that native's expression for beautiful. He was now asked a few questions concerning the putting off of the boats, and in particular whether there was any way of embarking at the back of the Island: which Captain Carton would have half liked to do, and then have dropped round in its shadow and slanted across to the main. But, 'No,' says Christian George King. 'No, no, no! Told you so, ten time. No, no, no! All reef, all rock, all swim, all drown!' Striking out as he said it, like a swimmer gone mad, and turning over on his back on dry land, and spluttering himself to death, in a manner that made him quite an exhibition.

The sun went down, after appearing to be a long time about it, and the assembly was called. Every man answered to his name, of course, and was at his post. It was not yet black dark,

and the roll was only just gone through, when up comes Mr. Commissioner Pordage with his Diplomatic coat on.

'Captain Carton,' says he, 'Sir, what is this?'

'This, Mr. Commissioner' (he was very short with him), 'is an expedition against the Pirates. It is a secret expedition, so please to keep it a secret.'

'Sir,' says Commissioner Pordage, 'I trust there is going to be no unnecessary cruelty committed?'

'Sir,' returns the officer, 'I trust not.'

'That is not enough, sir,' cries Commissioner Pordage, getting wroth. 'Captain Carton, I give you notice. Government requires you to treat the enemy with great delicacy, consideration, clemency, and forbearance.'

'Sir,' says Captain Carton, 'I am an English officer, commanding English Men, and I hope I am not likely to disappoint the Government's just expectations. But, I presume you know that these villains under their black flag have despoiled our countrymen of their property, burnt their homes, barbarously murdered them and their little children, and worse than murdered their wives and daughters?'

'Perhaps I do, Captain Carton,' answers Pordage, waving his hand with dignity; 'perhaps I do not. It is not customary, sir, for Government to commit itself.'

'It matters very little, Mr. Pordage, whether or no. Believing that I hold my commission by the allowance of God, and not that I have received it direct from the Devil, I shall certainly use it, with all avoidance of unnecessary suffering and with all merciful swiftness of execution, to exterminate these people from the face of the earth. Let me recommend you to go home, sir, and to keep out of the night-air.'

Never another syllable did that officer say to the Commissioner, but turned away to his men. The Commissioner buttoned his Diplomatic coat to the chin, said, 'Mr. Kitten, attend me!' gasped, half choked himself, and took himself off.

It now fell very dark, indeed. I have seldom, if ever, seen it darker, nor yet so dark. The moon was not due until one in the morning, and it was but a little after nine when our men lay down where they were mustered. It was pretended that they were to

take a nap, but everybody knew that no nap was to be got under the circumstances. Though all were very quiet, there was a restlessness among the people; much what I have seen among the people on a race-course, when the bell has rung for the saddling for a great race with large stakes on it.

At ten, they put off; only one boat putting off at a time; another following in five minutes; both then lying on their oars until another followed. Ahead of all, paddling his own outlandish little canoe without a sound, went the Sambo pilot, to take them safely outside the reef. No light was shown but once, and that was in the commanding officer's own hand. I lighted the dark lantern for him, and he took it from me when he embarked. They had blue lights and such like with them, but kept themselves as dark as Murder.

The expedition got away with wonderful quietness, and Christian George King soon came back dancing with joy.

'Yup, So-Jeer,' says he to myself in a very objectionable kind of convulsions, 'Christian George King sar berry glad. Pirates all be blown a-pieces. Yup! Yup!'

My reply to that cannibal was, 'However glad you may be, hold your noise, and don't dance jigs and slap your knees about it, for I can't bear to see you do it.'

I was on duty then; we twelve who were left being divided into four watches of three each, three hours' spell. I was relieved at twelve. A little before that time, I had challenged, and Miss Maryon and Mrs. Belltott had come in.

'Good Davis,' says Miss Maryon, 'what is the matter? Where is my brother?'

I told her what was the matter, and where her brother was.

'O Heaven help him!' says she, clasping her hands and looking up—she was close in front of me, and she looked most lovely to be sure; 'he is not sufficiently recovered, not strong enough for such strife!'

'If you had seen him, miss,' I told her, 'as I saw him when he volunteered, you would have known that his spirit is strong enough for any strife. It will bear his body, miss, to wherever duty calls him. It will always bear him to an honourable life, or a brave death.'

'Heaven bless you!' says she, touching my arm. 'I know it. Heaven bless you!'

Mrs. Belltott surprised me by trembling and saying nothing. They were still standing looking towards the sea and listening, after the relief had come round. It continuing very dark, I asked to be allowed to take them back. Miss Maryon thanked me, and she put her arm in mine, and I did take them back. I have now got to make a confession that will appear singular. After I had left them, I laid myself down on my face on the beach, and cried for the first time since I had frightened birds as a boy at Snoridge Bottom, to think what a poor, ignorant, low-placed, private soldier I was.

It was only for half a minute or so. A man can't at all times be quite master of himself, and it was only for half a minute or so. Then I up and went to my hut, and turned into my hammock, and fell asleep with wet eyelashes, and a sore, sore heart. Just as I had often done when I was a child, and had been worse used than usual.

I slept (as a child under those circumstances might) very sound, and yet very sore at heart all through my sleep. I was awoke by the words, 'He is a determined man.' I had sprung out of my hammock, and had seized my firelock, and was standing on the ground, saying the words myself. 'He is a determined man.' But, the curiosity of my state was, that I seemed to be repeating them after somebody, and to have been wonderfully startled by hearing them.

As soon as I came to myself, I went out of the hut, and away to where the guard was. Charker challenged:

'Who goes there?'

'A friend.'

'Not Gill?' says he, as he shouldered his piece.

'Gill,' says I.

'Why, what the deuce do you do out of your hammock?' says he.

'Too hot for sleep,' says I; 'is all right?'

'Right!' says Charker, 'yes, yes; all 's right enough here; what should be wrong here? It 's the boats that we want to know of. Except for fire-flies twinkling about, and the lonesome splashes

of great creatures as they drop into the water, there 's nothing going on here to ease a man's mind from the boats.'

The moon was above the sea, and had risen, I should say, some half an hour. As Charker spoke, with his face towards the sea, I, looking landward, suddenly laid my right hand on his breast, and said, 'Don't move. Don't turn. Don't raise your voice! You never saw a Maltese face here?'

'No. What do you mean?' he asks, staring at me.

'Nor yet an English face, with one eye and a patch across the nose?'

'No. What ails you? What do you mean?'

I had seen both, looking at us round the stem of a cocoa-nut tree, where the moon struck them. I had seen that Sambo Pilot, with one hand laid on the stem of the tree, drawing them back into the heavy shadow. I had seen their naked cutlasses twinkle and shine, like bits of the moonshine in the water that had got blown ashore among the trees by the light wind. I had seen it all, in a moment. And I saw in a moment (as any man would), that the signalled move of the pirates on the mainland was a plot and a feint; that the leak had been made to disable the sloop; that the boats had been tempted away, to leave the Island unprotected; that the pirates had landed by some secreted way at the back; and that Christian George King was a double-dyed traitor, and a most infernal villain.

I considered, still all in one and the same moment, that Charker was a brave man, but not quick with his head; and that Sergeant Drooce, with a much better head was close by. All I said to Charker was, 'I am afraid we are betrayed. Turn your back full to the moonlight on the sea, and cover the stem of the cocoa-nut tree which will then be right before you, at the height of a man's heart. Are you right?'

'I am right,' says Charker, turning instantly, and falling into the position with a nerve of iron; 'and right ain't left. Is it, Gill?'

A few seconds brought me to Sergeant Drooce's hut. He was fast asleep, and being a heavy sleeper, I had to lay my hands upon him to rouse him. The instant I touched him he came rolling out of his hammock, and upon me like a tiger. And a tiger he

was, except that he knew what he was up to, in his utmost heat, as well as any man.

I had to struggle with him pretty hard to bring him to his senses, panting all the while (for he gave me a breather), 'Sergeant, I am Gill Davis! Treachery! Pirates on the Island!'

The last words brought him round, and he took his hands off. 'I have seen two of them within this minute,' said I. And so I told him what I had told Harry Charker.

His soldierly, though tyrannical, head was clear in an instant. He didn't waste one word, even of surprise. 'Order the guard,' says he, 'to draw off quietly into the Fort.' (They called the enclosure I have before mentioned, the Fort, though it was not much of that.) 'Then get you to the Fort, as quick as you can, rouse up every soul there, and fasten the gate. I will bring in all those who are up at the Signal Hill. If we are surrounded before we can join you, you must make a sally and cut us out if you can. The word among our men is, "Women and children!"'

He burst away, like fire going before the wind over dry reeds. He roused up the seven men who were off duty, and had them bursting away with him, before they knew they were not asleep. I reported orders to Charker, and ran to the Fort, as I have never run at any other time in all my life: no, not even in a dream.

The gate was not fast, and had no good fastening: only a double wooden bar, a poor chain, and a bad lock. Those, I secured as well as they could be secured in a few seconds by one pair of hands, and so ran to that part of the building where Miss Maryon lived. I called to her loudly by her name until she answered. I then called loudly all the names I knew—Mrs. Macey (Miss Maryon's married sister), Mr. Macey, Mrs. Venning, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, even Mr. and Mrs. Pordage. Then I called out, 'All you gentlemen here, get up and defend the place! We are caught in a trap. Pirates have landed. We are attacked!'

At the terrible word 'Pirates!'—for, those villains had done such deeds in those seas as never can be told in writing, and can scarcely be so much as thought of—cries and screams rose up from every part of the place. Quickly lights moved about from window to window, and the cries moved about with them, and men, women, and children came flying down into the square. I re-

marked to myself, even then, what a number of things I seemed to see at once. I noticed Mrs. Macey coming towards me, carrying all her three children together. I noticed Mr. Pordage in the greatest terror, in vain trying to get on his Diplomatic coat; and Mr. Kitten respectfully tying his pocket-handkerchief over Mrs. Pordage's nightcap. I noticed Mrs. Belltott run out screaming, and shrink upon the ground near me, and cover her face in her hands, and lie all of a bundle, shivering. But, what I noticed with the greatest pleasure was, the determined eyes with which those men of the Mine that I had thought fine gentlemen, came round me with what arms they had: to the full as cool and resolute as I could be, for my life—ay, and for my soul, too, into the bargain!

The chief person being Mr. Macey, I told him how the three men of the guard would be at the gate directly, if they were not already there, and how Sergeant Drooce and the other seven were gone to bring in the outlying part of the people of Silver-Store. I next urged him, for the love of all who were dear to him, to trust no Sambo, and, above all, if he could get any good chance at Christian George King, not to lose it, but to put him out of the world.

'I will follow your advice to the letter, Davis,' says he; 'what next?'

My answer was, 'I think, sir, I would recommend you next, to order down such heavy furniture and lumber as can be moved, and make a barricade within the gate.'

'That 's good again,' says he: 'will you see it done?'

'I 'll willingly help to do it,' says I, 'unless or until my superior, Sergeant Drooce, gives me other orders.'

He shook me by the hand, and having told off some of his companions to help me, bestirred himself to look to the arms and ammunition. A proper, quick, brave, steady, ready gentleman!

One of their three little children was deaf and dumb. Miss Maryon had been from the first with all the children, soothing them, and dressing them (poor little things, they had been brought out of their beds), and making them believe that it was a game of play, so that some of them were now even laughing. I had been working hard with the others at the barricade, and had got up a pretty good breastwork within the gate. Drooce and the

seven had come back, bringing in the people from the Signal Hill, and had worked along with us: but, I had not so much as spoken a word to Drooce, nor had Drooce so much as spoken a word to me, for we were both too busy. The breastwork was now finished, and I found Miss Maryon at my side, with a child in her arms. Her dark hair was fastened round her head with a band. She had a quantity of it, and it looked even richer and more precious, put up hastily out of her way, than I had seen it look when it was carefully arranged. She was very pale, but extraordinarily quiet and still.

'Dear good Davis,' said she, 'I have been waiting to speak one word to you.'

I turned to her directly. If I had received a musket-ball in the heart, and she had stood there, I almost believe I should have turned to her before I dropped.

'This pretty little creature,' said she, kissing the child in her arms, who was playing with her hair and trying to pull it down, 'cannot hear what we say—can hear nothing. I trust you so much, and have such great confidence in you, that I want you to make me a promise.'

'What is it, Miss?'

'That if we are defeated, and you are absolutely sure of my being taken, you will kill me.'

'I shall not be alive to do it, Miss. I shall have died in your defence before it comes to that. They must step across my body to lay a hand on you.'

'But, if you are alive, you brave soldier.' How she looked at me! 'And if you cannot save me from the Pirates, living, you will save me, dead. Tell me so.'

Well! I told her I would do that at the last, if all else failed. She took my hand—my rough, coarse hand—and put it to her lips. She put it to the child's lips, and the child kissed it. I believe I had the strength of half a dozen men in me, from that moment, until the fight was over.

All this time, Mr. Commissioner Pordage had been wanting to make a Proclamation to the Pirates to lay down their arms and go away; and everybody had been hustling him about and tumbling over him, while he was calling for pen and ink to write it with.

Mrs. Pordage, too, had some curious ideas about the British respectability of her nightcap (which had as many frills to it, growing in layers one inside another, as if it was a white vegetable of the artichoke sort), and she wouldn't take the nightcap off, and would be angry when it got crushed by the other ladies who were handing things about, and, in short, she gave as much trouble as her husband did. But, as we were now forming for the defence of the place, they were both poked out of the way with no ceremony. The children and ladies were got into the little trench which surrounded the silver-house (we were afraid of leaving them in any of the light buildings, lest they should be set on fire), and we made the best disposition we could. There was a pretty good store, in point of amount, of tolerable swords and cutlasses. Those were issued. There were, also, perhaps a score or so of spare muskets. Those were brought out. To my astonishment, little Mrs. Fisher that I had taken for a doll and a baby, was not only very active in that service, but volunteered to load the spare arms.

'For, I understand it well,' says she, cheerfully, without a shake in her voice.

'I am a soldier's daughter and a sailor's sister, and I understand it too,' says Miss Maryon, just in the same way.

Steady and busy behind where I stood, those two beautiful and delicate young women fell to handling the guns, hammering the flints, looking to the locks, and quietly directing others to pass up powder and bullets from hand to hand, as unflinching as the best of tried soldiers.

Sergeant Drooce had brought in word that the pirates were very strong in numbers—over a hundred was his estimate—and that they were not, even then, all landed; for, he had seen them in a very good position on the further side of the Signal Hill, evidently waiting for the rest of their men to come up. In the present pause, the first we had had since the alarm, he was telling this over again to Mr. Macey, when Mr. Macey suddenly cried out: 'The signal! Nobody has thought of the signal!'

We knew of no signal, so we could not have thought of it.

'What signal may you mean, sir?' says Sergeant Drooce, looking sharp at him.

'There is a pile of wood upon the Signal Hill. If it could be

lighted—which never has been done yet—it would be a signal of distress to the mainland.'

Charker cries, directly: 'Sergeant Drooce, dispatch me on that duty. Give me the two men who were on guard with me to-night, and I 'll light the fire, if it can be done.'

'And if it can't, Corporal—' Mr. Macey strikes in.

'Look at these ladies and children, sir!' says Charker. 'I 'd sooner *light myself,* than not try any chance to save them.'

We gave him a Hurrah!—it burst from us, come of it what might—and he got his two men, and was let out at the gate, and crept away. I had no sooner come back to my place from being one of the party to handle the gate, than Miss Maryon said in a low voice behind me:

'Davis, will you look at this powder? This is not right.'

I turned my head. Christian George King again, and treachery again! Sea-water had been conveyed into the magazine, and every grain of powder was spoiled!

'Stay a moment,' said Sergeant Drooce, when I had told him, without causing a movement in the muscle of his face: 'look to your pouch, my lad. You Tom Packer, look to your pouch, confound you! Look to your pouches, all you Marines.'

The same artful savage had got at them, somehow or another, and the cartridges were all unserviceable. 'Hum!' says the Sergeant. 'Look to your loading, men. You are right so far?'

Yes; we were right so far.

'Well, my lads and gentlemen all,' says the Sergeant, 'this will be a hand-to-hand affair, and so much the better.'

He treated himself to a pinch of snuff, and stood up, square-shouldered and broad-chested, in the light of the moon—which was now very bright—as cool as if he was waiting for a play to begin. He stood quiet, and we all stood quiet, for a matter of something like half an hour. I took notice from such whispered talk as there was, how little we that the silver did not belong to, thought about it, and how much the people that it did belong to, thought about it. At the end of the half-hour, it was reported from the gate that Charker and the two were falling back on us, pursued by about a dozen.

'Sally! Gate-party, under Gill Davis,' says the Sergeant, 'and bring 'em in! Like men, now!'

We were not long about it, and we brought them in. 'Don't take me,' says Charker, holding me round the neck, and stumbling down at my feet when the gate was fast, 'don't take me near the ladies or the children, Gill. They had better not see Death, till it can't be helped. They 'll see it soon enough.'

'Harry!' I answered, holding up his head. 'Comrade!'

He was cut to pieces. The signal had been secured by the first pirate party that landed; his hair was all singed off, and his face was blackened with the running pitch from a torch.

He made no complaint of pain, or of anything. 'Good-bye, old chap,' was all he said, with a smile. 'I 've got my death. And Death ain't life. Is it, Gill?'

Having helped to lay his poor body on one side, I went back to my post. Sergeant Drooce looked at me, with his eyebrows a little lifted. I nodded. 'Close up here, men and gentlemen all!' said the Sergeant. 'A place too many, in the line.'

The Pirates were so close upon us at this time, that the foremost of them were already before the gate. More and more came up with a great noise, and shouting loudly. When we believed from the sound that they were all there, we gave three English cheers. The poor little children joined, and were so fully convinced of our being at play, that they enjoyed the noise, and were heard clapping their hands in the silence that followed.

Our disposition was this, beginning with the rear. Mrs. Venning, holding her daughter's child in her arms, sat on the steps of the little square trench surrounding the silver-house, encouraging and directing those women and children as she might have done in the happiest and easiest time of her life. Then, there was an armed line, under Mr. Macey, across the width of the enclosure, facing that way and having their backs towards the gate, in order that they might watch the walls and prevent our being taken by surprise. Then there was a space of eight or ten feet deep, in which the spare arms were, and in which Miss Maryon and Mrs Fisher, their hands and dresses blackened with the spoilt gunpowder, worked on their knees, tying such things as knives, old bayonets, and spearheads to the muzzles of the useless muskets

Then, there was a second armed line, under Sergeant Drooce, also across the width of the enclosure, but facing the gate. Then came the breastwork we had made, with a zig-zag way through it for me and my little party to hold good in retreating, as long as we could, when we were driven from the gate. We all knew that it was impossible to hold the place long, and that our only hope was in the timely discovery of the plot by the boats, and in their coming back.

I and my men were now thrown forward to the gate. From a spy-hole, I could see the whole crowd of Pirates. There were Malays among them, Dutch, Maltese, Greeks, Sambos, Negroes, and Convict Englishmen from the West India Islands; among the last, him with the one eye and the patch across the nose. There were some Portuguese, too, and a few Spaniards. The captain was a Portuguese; a little man with very large ear-rings under a very broad hat, and a great bright shawl twisted about his shoulders. They were all strongly armed, but like a boarding party, with pikes, swords, cutlasses, and axes. I noticed a good many pistols, but not a gun of any kind among them. This gave me to understand that they had considered that a continued roll of musketry might perhaps have been heard on the mainland; also that for the reason that fire would be seen from the mainland they would not set the Fort in flames and roast us alive; which was one of their favourite ways of carrying on. I looked about for Christian George King, and if I had seen him I am much mistaken if he would not have received my one round of ball-cartridge in his head. But, no Christian George King was visible.

A sort of a wild Portuguese demon, who seemed either fierce-mad or fierce-drunk—but, they all seemed one or the other—came forward with the black flag, and gave it a wave or two. After that, the Portuguese captain called out in shrill English, 'I say you! English fools! Open the gate! Surrender!'

As we kept close and quiet, he said something to his men which I didn't understand, and when he had said it, the one-eyed English rascal with the patch (who had stepped out when he began), said it again in English. It was only this. 'Boys of the black flag, this is to be quickly done. Take all the prisoners you can. If they don't yield, kill the children to make them. Forward!' Then, they

all came on at the gate, and, in another half minute were smashing and splitting it in.

We struck at them through the gaps and shivers, and we dropped many of them, too; but, their very weight would have carried such a gate, if they had been unarmed. I soon found Sergeant Drooce at my side, forming us six remaining marines in line—Tom Packer next to me—and ordering us to fall back three paces, and, as they broke in, to give them our one little volley at short distance. 'Then,' says he, 'receive them behind your breastwork on the bayonet, and at least let every man of you pin one of the cursed cock-chafers through the body.'

We checked them by our fire, slight as it was, and we checked them at the breastwork. However, they broke over it like swarms of devils—they were, really and truly, more devils than men—and then it was hand to hand, indeed.

We clubbed our muskets and laid about us; even then, those two ladies—always behind me—were steady and ready with the arms. I had a lot of Maltese and Malays upon me, and, but for a broadsword that Miss Maryon's own hand put in mine, should have got my end from them. But, was that all? No. I saw a heap of banded dark hair and a white dress come thrice between me and them, under my own raised right arm, which each time might have destroyed the wearer of the white dress; and each time one of the lot went down, struck dead.

Drooce was armed with a broadsword, too, and did such things with it, that there was a cry, in half a dozen languages, of 'Kill that sergeant!' as I knew, by the cry being raised in English, and taken up in other tongues. I had received a severe cut across the left arm a few moments before, and should have known nothing of it, except supposing that somebody had struck me a smart blow, if I had not felt weak, and seen myself covered with spouting blood, and, at the same instant of time, seen Miss Maryon tearing her dress and binding it with Mrs. Fisher's help round the wound. They called to Tom Packer, who was scouring by, to stop and guard me for one minute, while I was bound, or I should bleed to death in trying to defend myself. Tom stopped directly, with a good sabre in his hand.

In that same moment—all things seem to happen in that same

moment, at such a time—half a dozen had rushed howling at Sergeant Drooce. The Sergeant, stepping back against the wall, stopped one howl for ever with such a terrible blow, and waited for the rest to come on, with such a wonderfully unmoved face, that they stopped and looked at him.

'See him now!' cried Tom Packer. 'Now, when I could cut him out! Gill! Did I tell you to mark my words?'

I implored Tom Packer in the Lord's name, as well as I could in my faintness, to go to the Sergeant's aid.

'I hate and detest him,' says Tom, moodily wavering. 'Still, he is a brave man.' Then he calls out, 'Sergeant Drooce, Sergeant Drooce! Tell me you have driven me too hard, and are sorry for it.'

The Sergeant, without turning his eyes from his assailants, which would have been instant death to him, answers:

'No. I won't.'

'Sergeant Drooce!' cries Tom, in a kind of an agony. 'I have passed my word that I would never save you from Death, if I could, but would leave you to die. Tell me you have driven me too hard and are sorry for it, and that shall go for nothing.'

One of the group laid the Sergeant's bald bare head open. The Sergeant laid him dead.

'I tell you,' says the Sergeant, breathing a little short, and waiting for the next attack, 'no. I won't. If you are not man enough to strike for a fellow-soldier because he wants help, and because of nothing else, I 'll go into the other world and look for a better man.'

Tom swept upon them, and cut him out. Tom and he fought their way through another knot of them, and sent them flying, and came over to where I was beginning again to feel, with inexpressible joy, that I had got a sword in my hand.

They had hardly come to us, when I heard, above all the other noises, a tremendous cry of women's voices. I also saw Miss Maryon, with quite a new face, suddenly clap her two hands over Miss Fisher's eyes. I looked towards the silver-house, and saw Mrs. Venning—standing upright on the top of the steps of the trench, with her gray hair and her dark eyes—hide her daughter's

child behind her, among the folds of her dress, strike a pirate with her other hand, and fall, shot by his pistol.

The cry arose again, and there was a terrible and confusing rush of the women into the midst of the struggle. In another moment, something came tumbling down upon me that I thought was the wall. It was a heap of Sambos who had come over the wall; and of four men who clung to my legs like serpents, one who clung to my right leg was Christian George King.

'Yup So-Jeer,' says he, 'Christian George King sar berry glad So-Jeer a prisoner. Christian George King been waiting for So-Jeer sech long time. Yup, yup!'

What could I do, with five-and-twenty of them on me, but be tied hand and foot? So, I was tied hand and foot. It was all over now—boats not come back—all lost! When I was fast bound and was put up against the wall, the one-eyed English convict came up with the Portuguese Captain, to have a look at me.

'See!' says he. 'Here 's the determined man! If you had slept sounder, last night, you 'd have slept your soundest last night, my determined man.'

The Portuguese Captain laughed in a cool way, and with the flat of his cutlass, hit me crosswise, as if I was the bough of a tree that he played with: first on the face, and then across the chest and the wounded arm. I looked him steady in the face without tumbling while he looked at me, I am happy to say; but, when they went away, I fell, and lay there.

The sun was up, when I was roused and told to come down to the beach and be embarked. I was full of aches and pains, and could not at first remember; but, I remembered quite soon enough. The killed were lying about all over the place, and the Pirates were burying their dead, and taking away their wounded on hastily-made litters, to the back of the Island. As for us prisoners, some of their boats had come round to the usual harbour, to carry us off. We looked a wretched few, I thought, when I got down there; still, it was another sign that we had fought well, and made the enemy suffer.

The Portuguese Captain had all the women already embarked in the boat he himself commanded, which was just putting off when I got down. Miss Maryon sat on one side of him, and gave

me a moment's look, as full of quiet courage, and pity, and confidence, as if it had been an hour long. On the other side of him was poor little Mrs. Fisher, weeping for her child and her mother. I was shoved into the same boat with Drooce and Packer, and the remainder of our party of marines: of whom we had lost two privates, besides Charker, my poor, brave comrade. We all made a melancholy passage, under the hot sun over to the mainland. There, we landed in a solitary place, and were mustered on the sea sand. Mr. and Mrs. Macey and their children were amongst us, Mr. and Mrs. Pordage, Mr. Kitten, Mr. Fisher, and Mrs. Belltott. We mustered only fourteen men, fifteen women, and seven children. Those were all that remained of the English who had lain down to sleep last night, unsuspecting and happy, on the Island of Silver-Store.

[The second chapter, which was not written by Dickens, describes the Prisoners (twenty-two women and children) taken into the interior by the Pirate Captain, who makes them the material guarantee for the precious metal and jewels left on the island; declaring that, if the latter be wrested by English ships from the pirates in charge, he will murder the captives. From their 'Prison in the Woods,' however (this being the title of the second chapter), they escape by means of rafts down the river; and the sequel is told in a third and concluding chapter by Dickens.]

CHAPTER III

THE RAFTS ON THE RIVER

We contrived to keep afloat all that night, and, the stream running strong with us, to glide a long way down the river. But, we found the night to be a dangerous time for such navigation, on account of the eddies and rapids, and it was therefore settled next day that in future we would bring-to at sunset, and encamp on the shore. As we knew of no boats that the Pirates possessed, up at the Prison in the Woods, we settled always to encamp on the opposite side of the stream, so as to have the breadth of the river between

our sleep and them. Our opinion was, that if they were acquainted with any near way by land to the mouth of this river, they would come up it in force, and retake us or kill us, according as they could; but that if that was not the case, and if the river ran by none of their secret stations, we might escape.

When I say we settled this or that, I do not mean that we planned anything with any confidence as to what might happen an hour hence. So much had happened in one night, and such great changes had been violently and suddenly made in the fortunes of many among us, that we had got better used to uncertainty, in a little while, than I dare say most people do in the course of their lives.

The difficulties we soon got into, through the offsettings and point-currents of the stream, made the likelihood of our being drowned, alone—to say nothing of our being retaken—as broad and plain as the sun at noonday to all of us. But, we all worked hard at managing the rafts, under the direction of the seamen (of our own skill, I think we never could have prevented them from oversetting), and we also worked hard at making good the defects in their first hasty construction—which the water soon found out. While we humbly resigned ourselves to going down, if it was the will of Our Father that was in Heaven, we humbly made up our minds, that we would all do the best that was in us.

And so we held on, gliding with the stream. It drove us to this bank, and it drove us to that bank, and it turned us, and whirled us; but yet it carried us on. Sometimes much too slowly; sometimes much too fast, but yet it carried us on.

My little deaf and dumb boy slumbered a good deal now, and that was the case with all the children. They caused very little trouble to any one. They seemed, in my eyes, to get more like one another, not only in quiet manner, but in the face, too. The motion of the raft was usually so much the same, the scene was usually so much the same, the sound of the soft wash and ripple of the water was usually so much the same, that they were made drowsy, as they might have been by the constant playing of one tune. Even on the grown people, who worked hard and felt anxiety, the same things produced something of the same effect. Every day was so like the other, that I soon lost count of the

days, myself, and had to ask Miss Maryon, for instance, whether this was the third or fourth? Miss Maryon had a pocket-book and pencil, and she kept the log; that is to say, she entered up a clear little journal of the time, and of the distances our seamen thought we had made, each night.

So, as I say, we kept afloat and glided on. All day long, and every day, the water, and the woods, and sky; all day long, and every day, the constant watching of both sides of the river, and far ahead at every bold turn and sweep it made, for any signs of Pirate-boats, or Pirate-dwellings. So, as I say, we kept afloat and glided on. The days melting themselves together to that degree, that I could hardly believe my ears when I asked, 'How many, now, Miss?' and she answered, 'Seven.'

To be sure, poor Mr. Pordage had, by about now, got his Diplomatic coat into such a state as never was seen. What with the mud of the river, what with the water of the river, what with the sun, and the dews, and the tearing boughs, and the thickets, it hung about him in discoloured shreds like a mop. The sun had touched him a bit. He had taken to always polishing one particular button, which just held on to his left wrist, and to always calling for stationery. I suppose that man called for pens, ink, and paper, tape, and sealing-wax, upwards of one thousand times in four-and-twenty hours. He had an idea that we should never get out of that river unless we were written out of it in a formal Memorandum; and the more we laboured at navigating the rafts, the more he ordered us not to touch them at our peril, and the more he sat and roared for stationery.

Mrs. Pordage, similarly, persisted in wearing her night-cap. I doubt if any one but ourselves who had seen the progress of that article of dress, could by this time have told what it was meant for. It had got so limp and ragged that she couldn't see out of her eyes for it. It was so dirty, that whether it was vegetable matter out of a swamp, or weeds out of the river, or an old porter's-knot from England, I don't think any new spectator could have said. Yet, this unfortunate old woman had a notion that it was not only vastly genteel, but that it was the correct thing as to propriety. And she really did carry herself over the other ladies who had no night-caps, and who were forced to tie up

their hair how they could, in a superior manner that was perfectly amazing.

I don't know what she looked like, sitting in that blessed night-cap, on a log of wood, outside the hut or cabin upon our raft. She would have rather resembled a fortune-teller in one of the picture-books that used to be in the shop windows in my boyhood, except for her stateliness. But, Lord bless my heart, the dignity with which she sat and moped, with her head in that bundle of tatters, was like nothing else in the world! She was not on speaking terms with more than three of the ladies. Some of them had, what she called, 'taken precedence' of her—in getting into, or out of, that miserable little shelter!—and others had not called to pay their respects, or something of that kind. So, there she sat, in her own state and ceremony, while her husband sat on the same log of wood, ordering us one and all to let the raft go to the bottom, and to bring him stationery.

What with this noise on the part of Mr. Commissioner Pordage, and what with the cries of Sergeant Drooce on the raft astern (which were sometimes more than Tom Packer could silence), we often made our slow way down the river, anything but quietly. Yet, that it was of great importance that no ears shoud be able to hear us from the woods on the banks, could not be doubted. We were looked for, to a certainty, and we might be retaken at any moment. It was an anxious time: it was, indeed, indeed, an anxious time.

On the seventh night of our voyage on the rafts, we made fast, as usual, on the opposite side of the river to that from which we had started, in as dark a place as we could pick out. Our little encampment was soon made, and supper was eaten, and the children fell asleep. The watch was set, and everything made orderly for the night. Such a starlight night, with such blue in the sky, and such black in the places of heavy shade on the banks of the great stream!

Those two ladies, Miss Maryon and Mrs. Fisher, had always kept near me since the night of the attack. Mr. Fisher, who was untiring in the work of our raft, had said to me:

'My dear little childless wife has grown so attached to you, Davis, and you are such a gentle fellow, as well as such a deter-

mined one'; our party had adopted that last expression from the one-eyed English pirate, and I repeat what Mr. Fisher said, only because he said it; 'that it takes a load off my mind to leave her in your charge.'

I said to him: 'Your lady is in far better charge than mine, sir, having Miss Maryon to take care of her; but, you may rely upon it, that I will guard them both—faithful and true.'

Says he: 'I do rely upon it, Davis, and I heartily wish all the silver on our old Island was yours.'

That seventh starlight night, as I have said, we made our camp, and got our supper, and set our watch, and the children fell asleep. It was solemn and beautiful in those wild and solitary parts, to see them, every night before they lay down, kneeling under the bright sky, saying their little prayers at women's laps. At that time we men all uncovered, and mostly kept at a distance. When the innocent creatures rose up, we murmured 'Amen!' all together. For, though we had not heard what they said, we knew it must be good for us.

At that time, too, as was only natural, those poor mothers in our company, whose chldren had been killed, shed many tears. I thought the sight seemed to console them while it made them cry; but, whether I was right or wrong in that, they wept very much. On this seventh night, Mrs. Fisher had cried for her lost darling until she cried herself asleep. She was lying on a little couch of leaves and such-like (I made the best little couch I could for them every night), and Miss Maryon had covered her, and sat by her, holding her hand. The stars looked down upon them. As for me, I guarded them.

'Davis!' says Miss Maryon. (I am not going to say what a voice she had. I couldn't if I tried.)

'I am here, Miss.'

'The river sounds as if it were swollen to-night.'

'We all think, Miss, that we are coming near the sea.'

'Do you believe now, we shall escape?'

'I do now, Miss, really believe it.' I had always said I did; but, I had in my own mind been doubtful.

'How glad you will be, my good Davis, to see England again!'

I have another confession to make that will appear singular.

When she said these words, something rose in my throat; and the stars I looked away at, seemed to break into sparkles that fell down my face and burnt it.

'England is not much to me, Miss, except as a name.'

'O, so true an Englishman should not say that!—Are you not well to-night, Davis?' Very kindly, and with a quick change.

'Quite well, Miss.'

'Are you sure? Your voice sounds altered in my hearing.'

'No, Miss, I am a stronger man than ever. But, England is nothing to me.'

Miss Maryon sat silent for so long a while, that I believed she had done speaking to me for one time. However, she had not; for by and by she said in a distinct, clear tone:

'No, good friend; you must not say that England is nothing to you. It is to be much to you, yet—everything to you. You have to take back to England the good name you have earned here, and the gratitude and attachment and respect you have won here: and you have to make some good English girl very happy and proud, by marrying her; and I shall one day see her, I hope, and make her happier and prouder still, by telling her what noble services her husband's were in South America, and what a noble friend he was to me there.'

Though she spoke these kind words in a cheering manner, she spoke them compassionately. I said nothing. It will appear to be another strange confession, that I paced to and fro, within call, all that night, a most unhappy man, reproaching myself all the night long. 'You are as ignorant as any man alive; you are as obscure as any man alive; you are as poor as any man alive; you are no better than the mud under your foot.' That was the way in which I went on against myself until the morning.

With the day, came the day's labour. What I should have done without the labour, I don't know. We were afloat again at the usual hour, and were again making our way down the river. It was broader, and clearer of obstructions than it had been, and it seemed to flow faster. This was one of Drooce's quiet days; Mr. Pordage, besides being sulky, had almost lost his voice; and we made good way, and with little noise.

There was always a seaman forward on the raft, keeping a

bright look-out. Suddenly, in the full heat of the day, when the children were slumbering, and the very trees and reeds appeared to be slumbering, this man—it was Short—holds up his hand, and cries with great caution: 'Avast! Voices ahead!'

We held on against the stream as soon as we could bring her up, and the other raft followed suit. At first, Mr. Macey, Mr. Fisher, and myself, could hear nothing; though both the seamen aboard of us agreed that they could hear voices and oars. After a little pause, however, we united in thinking that we *could* hear the sound of voices, and the dip of oars. But, you can hear a long way in those countries, and there was a bed of the river before us, and nothing was to be seen except such waters and such banks as we were now in the eight day (and might, for the matter of our feelings, have been in the eightieth), of having seen with anxious eyes.

It was soon decided to put a man ashore, who should creep through the wood, see what was coming, and warn the rafts. The rafts in the meantime to keep the middle of the stream. The man to be put ashore, and not to swim ashore, as the first thing could be more quickly done than the second. The raft conveying him, to get back into mid-stream, and to hold on along with the other, as well as it could, until signalled by the man. In case of danger, the man to shift for himself until it should be safe to take him on board again. I volunteered to be the man.

We knew that the voices and oars must come up slowly against the stream; and our seamen knew, by the set of the stream, under which bank they would come. I was put ashore accordingly. The raft got off well, and I broke into the wood.

Steaming hot it was, and a tearing place to get through. So much the better for me, since it was something to contend against and do. I cut off the bend of the river, at a great saving of space, came to the water's edge again, and hid myself, and waited. I could now hear the dip of the oars very distinctly; the voices had ceased.

The sound came on in a regular tune, and as I lay hidden, I fancied the tune so played to be, 'Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King!' over and over again, always the same, with the pauses always at the same

places. I had likewise time to make up my mind that if these were the Pirates, I could and would (barring my being shot) swim off to my raft, in spite of my wound, the moment I had given the alarm, and hold my old post by Miss Maryon.

'Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King! Chris'-en—George—King!' coming up, now, very near.

I took a look at the branches about me, to see where a shower of bullets would be most likely to do me least hurt; and I took a look back at the track I had made in forcing my way in; and now I was wholly prepared and fully ready for them.

'Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en—George—King! Chris'en —George—King!' Here they were!

Who were they? The barbarous Pirates, scum of all nations, headed by such men as the hideous little Portuguese monkey, and the one-eyed English convict with the gash across his face, that ought to have gashed his wicked head off? The worst men in the world picked out from the worst, to do the cruellest and most atrocious deeds that ever stained it? The howling, murdering, black-flag waving, mad, and drunken crowd of devils that had overcome us by numbers and by treachery? No. These were English men in English boats—good blue-jackets and red-coats—marines that I knew myself, and sailors that knew our seamen! At the helm of the first boat, Captain Carton, eager and steady. At the helm of the second boat, Captain Maryon, brave and bold. At the helm of the third boat, an old seaman, with determination carved into his watchful face, like the figure-head of a ship. Every man doubly and trebly armed from head to foot. Every man lying-to at his work, with a will that had all his heart and soul in it. Every man looking out for any trace of friend or enemy, and burning to be the first to do good or avenge evil. Every man with his face on fire when he saw me, his countryman who had been taken prisoner, and hailed me with a cheer, as Captain Carton's boat ran in and took me on board.

I reported, 'All escaped, sir! All well, all safe, all here!'

God bless me—and God bless them—what a cheer! It turned me weak, as I was passed on from hand to hand to the stern of the boat: every hand patting me or grasping me in some way or other, in the moment of my going by.

'Hold up, my brave fellow,' says Captain Carton, clapping me on the shoulder like a friend, and giving me a flask. 'Put your lips to that and they 'll be red again. Now, boys give way!'

The banks flew by us as if the mightiest stream that ever ran was with us; and so it was, I am sure, meaning the stream to those men's ardour and spirit. The banks flew by us, and we came in sight of the rafts—the banks flew by us, and we came alongside of the rafts—the banks stopped; and there was a tumult of laughing and crying, and kissing and shaking of hands, and catching up of children and setting of them down again, and a wild hurry of thankfulness and joy that melted every one and softened all hearts.

I had taken notice, in Captain Carton's boat, that there was a curious and quite new sort of fitting on board. It was a kind of a little bower made of flowers, and it was set up behind the captain, and betwixt him and the rudder. Not only was this arbour, so to call it, neatly made of flowers, but it was ornamented in a singular way. Some of the men had taken the ribbons and buckles off their hats, and hung them among the flowers; others had made festoons and streamers of their handkerchiefs, and hung them there; others had intermixed such trifles as bits of glass and shining fragments of lockets and tobacco-boxes with the flowers; so that altogether it was a very bright and lively object in the sunshine. But why there, or what for, I did not understand.

Now, as soon as the first bewilderment was over, Captain Carton gave the order to land for the present. But this boat of his, with two hands left in her, immediately put off again when the men were out of her, and kept off, some yards from the shore. As she floated there, with the two hands gently backing water to keep her from going down the stream, this pretty little arbour attracted many eyes. None of the boat's crew, however, had anything to say about it, except that it was the captain's fancy.

The captain—with the women and children clustering round him, and the men of all ranks grouped outside them, and all listening—stood telling how the Expedition, deceived by its bad intelligence, had chased the light Pirate boats all that fatal night, and had still followed in their wake next day, and had never

suspected until many hours too late that the great Pirate body had drawn off in the darkness when the chase began, and shot over to the Island. He stood telling how the Expedition, supposing the whole array of armed boats to be ahead of it, got tempted into shallows and went aground; but not without having its revenge upon the two decoy-boats, both of which it had come up with, overhand, and sent to the bottom with all on board. He stood telling how the Expedition, fearing then that the case stood as it did, got afloat again, by great exertion, after the loss of four more tides, and returned to the Island, where they found the sloop scuttled and the treasure gone. He stood telling how my officer, Lieutenant Linderwood, was left upon the Island, with as strong a force as could be got together hurriedly from the mainland, and how the three boats we saw before us were manned and armed and had come away, exploring the coast and inlets, in search of any tidings of us. He stood telling all this, with his face to the river; and, as he stood telling it, the little arbour of flowers floated in the sunshine before all the faces there.

Leaning on Captain Carton's shoulder, between him and Miss Maryon, was Mrs. Fisher, her head drooping on her arm. She asked him, without raising it, when he had told so much, whether he had found her mother?

'Be comforted! She lies,' said the Captain gently, 'under the cocoa-nut trees on the beach.'

'And my child, Captain Carton, did you find my child, too? Does my darling rest with my mother?'

'No. Your pretty child sleeps,' said the Captain, 'under a shade of flowers.'

His voice shook; but there was something in it that struck all the hearers. At that moment there sprung from the arbour in his boat a little creature, clapping her hands and stretching out her arms, and crying, 'Dear papa! Dear Mamma! I am not killed. I am saved. I am coming to kiss you. Take me to them, take me to them, good, kind sailors!'

Nobody who saw that scene has ever forgotten it, I am sure, or ever will forget it. The child had kept quite still, where her brave grandmamma had put her (first whispering in her ear, 'Whatever happens to me, do not stir, my dear!'), and had re-

mained quiet until the fort was deserted; she had then crept out of the trench, and gone into her mother's house; and there, alone on the solitary Island, in her mother's room, and asleep on her mother's bed, the Captain had found her. Nothing could induce her to be parted from him after he took her up in his arms, and he had brought her away with him, and the men had made the bower for her. To see those men now, was a sight. The joy of the women was beautiful; the joy of those women who had lost their own children, was quite sacred and divine; but, the ecstasies of Captain Carton's boat's crew, when their pet was restored to her parents, were wonderful for the tenderness they showed in the midst of roughness. As the Captain stood with the child in his arms, and the child's own little arms now clinging round his neck, now round her father's, now round her mother's, now round some one who pressed up to kiss her, the boat's crew shook hands with one another, waved their hats over their heads, laughed, sang, cried, danced—and all among themselves, without wanting to interfere with anybody—in a manner never to be represented. At last, I saw the coxswain and another, two very hard-faced men, with grizzled heads, who had been the heartiest of the hearty all along, close with one another, get each of them the other's head under his arm, and pommel away at it with his fist as hard as he could, in his excess of joy.

When we had well rested and refreshed ourselves—and very glad we were to have some of the heartening things to eat and drink that had come up in the boats—we recommenced our voyage down the river: rafts, and boats, and all. I said to myself, it was a very different kind of voyage now, from what it had been; and I fell into my proper place and station among my fellow-soldiers.

But, when we halted for the night, I found that Miss Maryon had spoken to Captain Carton concerning me. For, the Captain came straight up to me, and says he, 'My brave fellow, you have been Miss Maryon's body-guard all along, and you shall remain so. Nobody shall supercede you in the distinction and pleasure of protecting that young lady.' I thanked his honour in the fittest words I could find, and that night I was placed on my old post of watching the place where she slept. More than once in the

night, I saw Captain Carton come out into the air and stroll about there, to see that all was well. I have now this other singular confession to make, that I saw him with a heavy heart. Yes; I saw him with a heavy, heavy heart.

In the day-time, I had the like post in Captain Carton's boat. I had a special station of my own, behind Miss Maryon, and no hands but hers ever touched my wound. (It has been healed these many long years; but, no other hands have ever touched it.) Mr. Pordage was kept tolerably quiet now, with pen and ink, and began to pick up his senses a little. Seated in the second boat, he made documents with Mr. Kitten, pretty well all day; and he generally handed in a Protest about something whenever we stopped. The Captain, however, made so very light of these papers, that it grew into a saying among the men, when one of them wanted a match for his pipe, 'Hand us over a Protest, Jack!' As to Mrs. Pordage, she still wore the nightcap, and she now had cut all the ladies on account of her not having been formally and separately rescued by Captain Carton before anybody else. The end of Mr. Pordage, to bring to an end all I know about him, was, that he got great compliments at home for his conduct on these trying occasions, and that he died of yellow jaundice, a Governor and a K. C. B.

Sergeant Drooce had fallen from a high fever into a low one. Tom Packer—the only man who could have pulled the Sergeant through it—kept hospital aboard the old raft, and Mrs. Belltott, as brisk as ever again (but the spirit of that little woman, when things tried it, was not equal to appearances), was head-nurse under his directions. Before we got down to the Mosquito coast, the joke had been made by one of our men, that we should see her gazetted Mrs. Tom Packer, *vice* Belltott exchanged.

When we reached the coast, we got native boats as substitutes for the rafts; and we rowed along under the land; and in that beautiful climate, and upon that beautiful water, the blooming days were like enchantment. Ah! They were running away, faster than any sea or river, and there was no tide to bring them back. We were coming very near the settlement where the people of Silver-Store were to be left, and from which we Marines were under orders to return to Belize.

Captain Carton had, in the boat by him, a curious long-barrelled Spanish gun, and he had said to Miss Maryon one day that it was the best of guns, and had turned his head to me, and said:

'Gill Davis, load her fresh with a couple of slugs, against a chance of showing how good she is.'

So, I had discharged the gun over the sea, and had loaded her, according to orders, and there it had lain at the Captain's feet, convenient to the Captain's hand.

The last day but one of our journey was an uncommonly hot day. We started very early; but, there was no cool air on the sea as the day got on, and by noon the heat was really hard to bear, considering that there were women and children to bear it. Now, we happened to open, just at that time, a very pleasant little cove or bay, where there was a deep shade from a great growth of trees. Now, the Captain, therefore, made the signal to the other boats to follow him in and lie by a while.

The men who were off duty went ashore, and lay down, but were ordered, for caution's sake, not to stray, and to keep within view. The others rested on their oars, and dozed. Awnings had been made of one thing and another, in all the boats, and the passengers found it cooler to be under them in the shade, when there was room enough, than to be in the thick woods. So, the passengers were all afloat, and mostly sleeping. I kept my post behind Miss Maryon, and she was on Captain Carton's right in the boat, and Mrs. Fisher sat on her right again. The Captain had Mrs. Fisher's daughter on his knee. He and the two ladies were talking about the Pirates, and were talking softly; partly, because people do talk softly under such indolent circumstances, and partly because the little girl had gone off to sleep.

I think I have before given it out for my Lady to write down, that Captain Carton had a fine bright eye of his own. All at once, he darted me a side look, as much as to say, 'Steady—don't take on—I see something!'—and gave the child into her mother's arms. That eye of his was so easy to understand, that I obeyed it by not so much as looking either to the right or to the left out of a corner of my own, or changing my attitude the least trifle. The Captain went on talking in the same mild and easy way; but began—with his arms resting across his knees, and his head a

little hanging forward, as if the heat were rather too much for him—began to play with the Spanish gun.

'They had laid their plans, you see,' says the Captain, taking up the Spanish gun across his knees, and looking, lazily, at the inlaying on the stock, 'with a great deal of art; and the corrupt or blundering local authorities were so easily deceived'; he ran his left hand idly along the barrel, but I saw, with my breath held, that he covered the action of cocking the gun with his right—'so easily deceived, that they summoned us to come out into the trap. But my intention as to future operations—' In a flash the Spanish gun was at his bright eye, and he fired.

All started up; innumerable echoes repeated the sound of the discharge; a cloud of bright-coloured birds flew out of the woods screaming; a handful of leaves were scattered in the place where the shot had struck; a crackling of branches was heard; and some lithe but heavy creature sprang into the air, and fell forward, head down, over the muddy bank.

'What is it?' cries Captain Maryon from his boat. All silent then, but the echoes rolling away.

'It is a Traitor and a Spy,' said Captain Carton, handing me the gun to load again. 'And I think the other name of the animal is Christian George King!'

Shot through the heart. Some of the people ran round to the spot, and drew him out, with the slime and wet trickling down his face; but his face itself would never stir any more to the end of time.

'Leave him hanging to that tree,' cried Captain Carton; his boat's crew giving way, and he leaping ashore. 'But first into this wood, every man in his place. And boats! Out of gunshot!'

It was a quick change, well meant and well made, though it ended in disappointment. No Pirates were there; no one but the Spy was found. It was supposed that the Pirates, unable to retake us, and expecting a great attack upon them to be the consequence of our escape, had made from the ruins in the Forest, taken to their ship along with the Treasure, and left the Spy to pick up what intelligence he could. In the evening we went away, and he was left hanging to the tree, all alone, with the red sun making a kind of a dead sunset on his black face.

Next day, we gained the settlement on the Mosquito coast for which we were bound. Having stayed there to refresh seven days, and having been much commended, and highly spoken of, and finely entertained, we Marines stood under orders to march from the Town-Gate (it was neither much of a town nor much of a gate), at five in the morning.

My officer had joined us before then. When we turned out at the gate, all the people were there; in the front of them all those who had been our fellow-prisoners, and all the seamen.

'Davis,' says Lieutenant Linderwood. 'Stand out, my friend!'

I stood out from the ranks, and Miss Maryon and Captain Carton came up to me.

'Dear Davis,' says Miss Maryon, while the tears fell fast down her face, 'your grateful friends, in most unwillingly taking leave of you, ask the favour that, while you bear away with you their affectionate remembrance, which nothing can ever impair, you will also take this purse of money—far more valuable to you, we all know, for the deep attachment and thankfulness with which it is offered, than for its own contents, though we hope those may prove useful to you, too, in after life.'

I got out, in answer, that I thankfully accepted the attachment and affection, but not the money. Captain Carton looked at me very attentively, and stepped back, and moved away. I made him my bow as he stepped back, to thank him for being so delicate.

'No, miss,' said I, 'I think it would break my heart to accept of money. But, if you could condescend to give to a man so ignorant and common as myself, any little thing you have worn—such as a bit of ribbon—'

She took a ring from her finger, and put it in my hand. And she rested her hand in mine, while she said these words:

'The brave gentlemen of old—but not one of them was braver, or had a nobler nature than you—took such gifts from ladies, and did all their good actions for the givers' sakes. If you will do yours for mine, I shall think with pride that I continue to have some share in the life of a gallant and generous man.'

For the second time in my life she kissed my hand. I made so bold, for the first time, as to kiss hers; and I tied the ring at my breast, and I fell back to my place.

Then, the horse-litter went out at the gate with Sergeant Drooce in it; and the horse-litter went out at the gate with Mrs. Belltott in it; and Lieutenant Linderwood gave the word of command, 'Quick march!' and, cheered and cried for, we went out of the gate too, marching along the level plain towards the serene blue sky, as if we were marching straight to Heaven.

When I have added here that the Pirate scheme was blown to shivers, by the Pirate-ship which had the Treasure on board being so vigorously attacked by one of His Majesty's cruisers, among the West India Keys, and being so swiftly boarded and carried, that nobody suspected anything about the scheme until three-fourths of the Pirates were killed, and the other fourth were in irons, and the Treasure was recovered; I come to the last singular confession I have got to make.

It is this. I well knew what an immense and hopeless distance there was between me and Miss Maryon; I well knew that I was no fitter company for her than I was for the angels; I well knew that she was as high above my reach as the sky over my head; and yet I loved her. What put it in my low heart to be so daring, or whether such a thing ever happened before or since, as that a man so uninstructed and obscure as myself got his unhappy thoughts lifted up to such a height, while knowing very well how presumptuous and impossible to be realised they were, I am unable to say; still, the suffering to me was just as great as if I had been a gentleman. I suffered agony—agony. I suffered hard, and I suffered long. I thought of her last words to me, however, and I never disgraced them. If it had not been for those dear words, I think I should have lost myself in despair and recklessness.

The ring will be found lying on my heart, of course, and will be laid with me wherever I am laid. I am getting on in years now, though I am able and hearty. I was recommended for promotion, and everything was done to reward me that could be done; but my total want of all learning stood in my way, and I found myself so completely out of the road to it, that I could not conquer any learning, though I tried. I was long in the service, and I respected it, and was respected in it, and the service is dear to me at this present hour.

At this present hour, when I give this out to my Lady to be

written down, all my old pain has softened away, and I am as happy as a man can be, at this present fine old country-house of Admiral Sir George Carton, Baronet. It was my Lady Carton who herself sought me out, over a great many miles of the wide world, and found me in Hospital wounded, and brought me here. It is my Lady Carton who writes down my words. My Lady was Miss Maryon. And now, that I conclude what I had to tell, I see my Lady's honoured grey hair droop over her face, as she leans a little lower at her desk; and I fervently thank her for being so tender as I see she is, towards the past pain and trouble of her poor, old, faithful, humble soldier.

GEORGE SILVERMAN'S EXPLANATION

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FIRST CHAPTER

It happened in this wise—

But, sitting with my pen in my hand looking at those words again, without descrying any hint in them of the words that should follow, it comes into my mind that they have an abrupt appearance. They may serve, however, if I let them remain, to suggest how very difficult I find it to begin to explain my explanation. An uncouth phrase; and yet I do not see my way to a better.

SECOND CHAPTER

It happened in *this* wise—

But, looking at those words, and comparing them with my former opening, I find they are the self-same words repeated. This is the more surprising to me, because I employ them in quite a new connection. For indeed I declare that my intention was to discard the commencement I first had in my thoughts, and to give the preference to another of an entirely different nature, dating my explanation from an anterior period of my life. I will make a third trial, without erasing this second failure, protesting that it is not my design to conceal any of my infirmities, whether they be of head or heart.

THIRD CHAPTER

Not as yet directly aiming at how it came to pass, I will come upon it by degrees. The natural manner, after all, for God knows that is how it came upon me.

My parents were in a miserable condition of life, and my infant home was a cellar in Preston. I recollect the sound of father's Lancashire clogs on the street pavement above, as being different in my young hearing from the sound of all other clogs; and I recollect, that, when mother came down the cellar-steps, I used tremblingly to speculate on her feet having a good or an ill tempered look,—on her knees,—on her waist,—until finally her face came into view, and settled the question. From this it will be seen that I was timid, and that the cellar-steps were steep, and that the doorway was very low.

Mother had the gripe and clutch of poverty upon her face, upon her figure, and not least of all upon her voice. Her sharp and high-pitched words were squeezed out of her, as by the compression of bony fingers on a leathern bag; and she had a way of rolling her eyes about and about the cellar, as she scolded, that was gaunt and hungry. Father, with his shoulders rounded, would sit quiet on a three-legged stool, looking at the empty grate, until she would pluck the stool from under him, and bid him go bring some money home. Then he would dismally ascend the steps; and I, holding my ragged shirt and trousers together with a hand (my only braces), would feint and dodge from mother's pursuing grasp at my hair.

A worldly little devil was mother's usual name for me. Whether I cried for that I was in the dark, or for that it was cold, or for that I was hungry, or whether I squeezed myself into a warm corner when there was a fire, or ate voraciously when there was food, she would still say, 'O you worldly little devil!' And the sting of it was, that I quite well knew myself to be a worldly little devil. Worldly as to wanting to be housed and warmed, worldly as to wanting to be fed, worldly as to the greed with which I inwardly compared how much I got of those good things with how much father and mother got, when, rarely, those good things were going.

Sometimes they both went away seeking work; and then I would be locked up in the cellar for a day or two at a time. I was at my worldliest then. Left alone, I yielded myself up to a worldly yearning for enough of anything (except misery), and for the death of mother's father, who was a machine-maker at Birming-

nam, and on whose decease, I had heard mother say, she would come into a whole courtful of houses 'if she had her rights.' Worldly little devil, I would stand about, musingly fitting my cold bare feet into cracked bricks and crevices of the damp cellar-floor, —walking over my grandfather's body, so to speak, into the courtful of houses, and selling them for meat and drink, and clothes to wear.

At last a change came down into our cellar. The universal change came down even as low as that,—so will it mount to any height on which a human creature can perch,—and brought other changes with it.

We had a heap of I don't know what foul litter in the darkest corner, which we called 'the bed.' For three days mother lay upon it without getting up, and then began at times to laugh. If I had ever heard her laugh before, it had been so seldom that the strange sound frightened me. It frightened father too; and we took it by turns to give her water. Then she began to move her head from side to side, and sing. After that, she getting no better, father fell a-laughing and a-singing; and then there was only I to give them both water, and they both died.

FOURTH CHAPTER

When I was lifted out of the cellar by two men, of whom one came peeping down alone first, and ran away and brought the other, I could hardly bear the light of the street. I was sitting in the road-way, blinking at it, and at a ring of people collected around me, but not close to me, when, true to my character of worldly little devil, I broke silence by saying, 'I am hungry and thirsty!'

'Does he know they are dead?' asked one of another.

'Do you know your father and mother are both dead of fever?' asked a third of me severely.

'I don't know what it is to be dead. I supposed it meant that, when the cup rattled against their teeth, and the water spilt over

them. I am hungry and thirsty.' That was all I had to say about it.

The ring of people widened outward from the inner side as I looked around me; and I smelt vinegar and what I know to be camphor, thrown in towards where I sat. Presently some one put a great vessel of smoking vinegar on the ground near me; and then they all looked at me in silent horror as I ate and drank of what was brought for me. I knew at the time they had a horror of me, but I couldn't help it.

I was still eating and drinking, and a murmur of discussion had begun to arise respecting what was to be done with me next, when I heard a cracked voice somewhere in the ring say, 'My name is Hawkyard, Mr. Verity Hawkyard, of West Bromwich.' Then the ring split in one place; and a yellow-faced, peak-nosed gentleman, clad all in iron-gray to his gaiters, pressed forward with a policeman and another official of some sort. He came forward close to the vessel of smoking vinegar; from which he sprinkled himself carefully, and me copiously.

'He had a grandfather at Birmingham, this young boy, who is just dead too,' said Mr. Hawkyard.

I turned my eyes upon the speaker, and said in a ravening manner, 'Where's his houses?'

'Hah! Horrible worldliness on the edge of the grave,' said Mr. Hawkyard, casting more of the vinegar over me, as if to get my devil out of me. 'I have undertaken a slight—a ve-ry slight—trust in behalf of this boy; quite a voluntary trust; a matter of mere honour, if not of mere sentiment: still I have taken it upon myself, and it shall be (O, yes, it shall be!) discharged.'

The bystanders seemed to form an opinion of this gentleman much more favourable than their opinion of me.

'He shall be taught,' said Mr. Hawkyard, '(O, yes, he shall be taught!) but what is to be done with him for the present? He may be infected. He may disseminate infection.' The ring widened considerably. 'What is to be done with him?'

He held some talk with the two officials. I could distinguish no word save 'Farm-house.' There was another sound several times repeated, which was wholly meaningless in my ears then, but which I knew afterwards to be 'Hoghton Towers.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Hawkyard. 'I think that sounds promising; I think that sounds hopeful. And he can be put by himself in a ward, for a night or two, you say?'

It seemed to be the police-officer who had said so; for it was he who replied, Yes! It was he, too, who finally took me by the arm, and walked me before him through the streets, into a whitewashed room in a bare building, where I had a chair to sit in, a table to sit at, an iron bedstead and good mattress to lie upon, and a rug and blanket to cover me. Where I had enough to eat too, and was shown how to clean the tin porringer in which it was conveyed to me, until it was as good as a looking-glass. Here, likewise, I was put in a bath, and had new clothes brought to me; and my old rags were burnt, and I was camphored and vinegared and disinfected in a variety of ways.

When all this was done,—I don't know in how many days or how few, but it matters not,—Mr. Hawkyard stepped in at the door, remaining close to it, and said, 'Go and stand against the opposite wall, George Silverman. As far off as you can. That'll do. How do you feel?'

I told him that I didn't feel cold, and didn't feel hungry, and didn't feel thirsty. That was the whole round of human feelings, as far as I knew, except the pain of being beaten.

'Well,' said he, 'you are going, George, to a healthy farm-house to be purified. Keep in the air there as much as you can. Live a out-of-door life there, until you are fetched away. You had better not say much—in fact, you had better be very careful not to say anything—about what your parents died of, or they might not like to take you in. Behave well, and I 'll put you to school; O, yes! I 'll put you to school, though I 'm not obligated to do it. I am a servant of the Lord, George; and I have been a good servant to him, I have, these five-and-thirty years. The Lord has had a good servant in me, and he knows it.'

What I then supposed him to mean by this, I cannot imagine. As little do I know when I began to comprehend that he was a prominent member of some obscure denomination or congregation, every member of which held forth to the rest when so inclined, and among whom he was called Brother Hawkyard. It was enough for me to know, on that day in the ward, that the farmer's

cart was waiting for me at the street corner. I was not slow to get into it; for it was the first ride I ever had in my life.

It made me sleepy, and I slept. First, I stared at Preston streets as long as they lasted; and, meanwhile, I may have had some small dumb wondering within me whereabouts our cellar was; but I doubt it. Such a worldly little devil was I, that I took no thought who would bury father and mother, or where they would be buried, or when. The question whether the eating and drinking by day, and the covering by night, would be as good at the farm-house as at the ward superseded those questions.

The jolting of the cart on a loose stony road awoke me; and I found that we were mounting a steep hill, where the road was a rutty by-road through a field. And so, by fragments of an ancient terrace, and by some rugged outbuildings that had once been fortified, and passing under a ruined gateway we came to the old farm-house in the thick stone wall outside the old quadrangle of Hoghton Towers: which I looked at like a stupid savage, seeing no specialty in, seeing no antiquity in; assuming all farm-houses to resemble it; assigning the decay I noticed to the one potent cause of all ruin that I knew,—poverty; eyeing the pigeons in their flights, the cattle in their stalls, the ducks in the pond, and the fowls pecking about the yard, with a hungry hope that plenty of them might be killed for dinner while I stayed there; wondering whether the scrubbed dairy vessels, drying in the sunlight, could be goodly porringers out of which the master ate his belly-filling food, and which he polished when he had done, according to my ward experience; shrinkingly doubtful whether the shadows, passing over that airy height on the bright spring day, were not something in the nature of frowns,—sordid, afraid, unadmiring,—a small brute to shudder at.

To that time I had never had the faintest impression of duty. I had had no knowledge whatever that there was anything lovely in this life. When I had occasionally slunk up the cellar-steps, into the street, and glared in at shop-windows, I had done so with no higher feelings than we may suppose to animate a mangy young dog or wolf-cub. It is equally the fact that I had never been alone, in the sense of holding unselfish converse with myself. I had been solitary often enough, but nothing better.

Such was my condition when I sat down to my dinner that day, in the kitchen of the old farm-house. Such was my condition when I lay on my bed in the old farm-house that night, stretched out opposite the narrow mullioned window, in the cold light of the moon, like a young vampire.

FIFTH CHAPTER

WHAT do I know now of Hoghton Towers? Very little; for I have been gratefully unwilling to disturb my first impressions. A house, centuries old, on high ground a mile or so removed from the road between Preston and Blackburn, where the first James of England, in his hurry to make money by making baronets, perhaps made some of those remunerative dignitaries. A house, centuries old, deserted and falling to pieces, its woods and gardens long since grass-land or ploughed up, the Rivers Ribble and Darwen glancing below it, and a vague haze of smoke, against which not even the supernatural prescience of the first Stuart could foresee a counterblast, hinting at steam-power, powerful in two distances.

What did I know then of Hoghton Towers? When I first peeped in at the gate of the lifeless quadrangle, and started from the mouldering statue becoming visible to me like its guardian ghost; when I stole round by the back of the farm-house, and got in among the ancient rooms, many of them with their floors and ceilings falling, the beams and rafters hanging dangerously down, the plaster dropping as I trod, the oaken panels stripped away, the windows half walled up, half broken; when I discovered a gallery commanding the old kitchen, and looked down between balustrades upon a massive old table and benches, fearing to see I know not what dead-alive creatures come in and seat themselves, and look up with I know not what dreadful eyes, or lack of eyes, at me; when all over the house I was awed by gaps and chinks where the sky stared sorrowfully at me, where the birds passed, and the ivy rustled, and the stains of winter weather blotched the rotten floors; when down at the bottom of dark pits of staircase

into which the stairs had sunk, green leaves trembled, butterflies fluttered, and bees hummed in and out through the broken doorways; when encircling the whole ruin were sweet scents, and sights of fresh green growth, and ever-renewing life, that I had never dreamed of,—I say, when I passed into such clouded perception of these things as my dark soul could compass, what did I know then of Hoghton Towers?

I have written that the sky stared sorrowfully at me. Therein have I anticipated the answer. I knew that all these things looked sorrowfully at me; that they seemed to sigh or whisper, not without pity for me, 'Alas! poor worldly little devil!'

There were two or three rats at the bottom of one of the smaller pits of broken staircase when I craned over and looked in. They were scuffling for some prey that was there; and, when they started and hid themselves close together in the dark, I thought of the old life (it had grown old already) in the cellar.

How not to be this worldly little devil? how not to have a repugnance towards myself as I had towards the rats? I hid in a corner of one of the smaller chambers, frightened at myself, and crying (it was the first time I had ever cried for any cause not purely physical), and I tried to think about it. One of the farm-ploughs came into my range of view just then; and it seemed to help me as it went on with its two horses up and down the field so peacefully and quietly.

There was a girl of about my own age in the farm-house family, and she sat opposite to me at the narrow table at meal-times. It had come into my mind, at our first dinner, that she might take the fever from me. The thought had not disquieted me then. I had only speculated how she would look under the altered circumstances, and whether she would die. But it came into my mind now, that I might try to prevent her taking the fever by keeping away from her. I knew I should have but scrambling board if I did; so much the less worldly and less devilish the deed would be, I thought.

From that hour, I withdrew myself at early morning into secret corners of the ruined house, and remained hidden there until she went to bed. At first, when meals were ready, I used to hear them calling me; and then my resolution weakened. But I strengthened

it again by going farther off into the ruin, and getting out of hearing. I often watched for her at the dim windows; and, when I saw that she was fresh and rosy, felt much happier.

Out of this holding her in my thoughts, to the humanising of myself, I suppose some childish love arose within me. I felt, in some sort, dignified by the pride of protecting her,—by the pride of making the sacrifice for her. As my heart swelled with that new feeling, it insensibly softened about mother and father. It seemed to have been frozen before, and now to be thawed. The old ruin and all the lovely things that haunted it were not sorrowful for me only, but sorrowful for mother and father as well. Therefore did I cry again, and often too.

The farm-house family conceived me to be of a morose temper, and were very short with me; though they never stinted me in such broken fare as was to be got out of regular hours. One night when I lifted the kitchen latch at my usual time, Sylvia (that was her pretty name) had but just gone out of the room. Seeing her ascending the opposite stairs, I stood still at the door. She had heard the clink of the latch, and looked round.

'George,' she called to me in a pleased voice, 'to-morrow is my birthday; and we are to have a fiddler, and there's a party of boys and girls coming in a cart, and we shall dance. I invite you. Be sociable for once, George.'

'I am very sorry, miss,' I answered; 'but I—but, no; I can't come.'

'You are a disagreeable, ill-humoured lad,' she returned disdainfully; 'and I ought not to have asked you. I shall never speak to you again.'

As I stood with my eyes fixed on the fire, after she was gone, I felt that the farmer bent his brows upon me.

'Eh, lad!' said he; 'Sylvy's right. You're as moody and broody a lad as ever I set eyes on yet.'

I tried to assure him that I meant no harm; but he only said coldly, 'Maybe not, maybe not! There, get thy supper, get thy supper; and then thou canst sulk to thy heart's content again.'

Ah! if they could have seen me next day, in the ruin, watching for the arrival of the cart full of merry young guests; if they could have seen me at night, gliding out from behind the ghostly statue,

listening to the music and the fall of dancing feet, and watching the lighted farm-house windows from the quadrangle when all the ruin was dark; if they could have read my heart, as I crept up to bed by the back way, comforting myself with the reflection, 'They will take no hurt from me,'—they would not have thought mine a morose or an unsocial nature.

It was in these ways that I began to form a shy disposition; to be of a timidly silent character under misconstruction; to have an inexpressible, perhaps a morbid, dread of ever being sordid or worldly. It was in these ways that my nature came to shape itself to such a mould, even before it was affected by the influences of the studious and retired life of a poor scholar.

SIXTH CHAPTER

Brother Hawkyard (as he insisted on my calling him) put me to school, and told me to work my way. 'You are all right, George,' he said. 'I have been the best servant the Lord has had in his service for this five-and-thirty year (O, I have!); and he knows the value of such a servant as I have been to him (O, yes, he does!); and he 'll prosper your schooling as a part of my reward. That's what *he* 'll do, George. He 'll do it for me.'

From the first I could not like this familiar knowledge of the ways of the sublime, inscrutable Almighty, on Brother Hawkyard's part. As I grew a little wiser, and still a little wiser, I liked it less and less. His manner, too, of confirming himself in a parenthesis,—as if, knowing himself, he doubted his own word,—I found distasteful. I cannot tell how much these dislikes cost me; for I had a dread that they were worldly.

As time went on, I became a Foundation-boy on a good foundation, and I cost Brother Hawkyard nothing. When I had worked my way so far, I worked yet harder, in the hope of ultimately getting a presentation to college and a fellowship. My health has never been strong (some vapour from the Preston cellar cleaves to me, I think); and what with much work and some

weakness, I came again to be regarded—that is, by my fellow-students—as unsocial.

All through my time as a foundation-boy, I was within a few miles of Brother Hawkyard's congregation; and whenever I was what we called a leave-boy on a Sunday, I went over there at his desire. Before the knowledge became forced upon me that outside their place of meeting these brothers and sisters were no better than the rest of the human family, but on the whole were, to put the case mildly, as bad as most, in respect of giving short weight in their shops, and not speaking the truth,—I say, before this knowledge became forced upon me, their prolix addresses, their inordinate conceit, their daring ignorance, their investment of the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth with their own miserable meannesses and littlenesses, greatly shocked me. Still, as their term for the frame of mind that could not perceive them to be in an exalted state of grace was the 'worldly' state, I did for a time suffer tortures under my inquiries of myself whether that young worldly-devilish spirit of mine could secretly be lingering at the bottom of my non-appreciation.

Brother Hawkyard was the popular expounder in this assembly, and generally occupied the platform (there was a little platform with a table on it, in lieu of a pulpit) first, on a Sunday afternoon. He was by trade a drysalter. Brother Gimblet, an elderly man with a crabbed face, a large dog's-eared shirt-collar, and a spotted blue neckerchief reaching up behind to the crown of his head, was also a drysalter and an expounder. Brother Gimblet professed the greatest admiration for Brother Hawkyard, but (I had thought more than once) bore him a jealous grudge.

Let whosoever may peruse these lines kindly take the pains here to read twice my solemn pledge, that what I write of the language and customs of the congregation in question I write scrupulously, literally, exactly, from the life and the truth.

On the first Sunday after I had won what I had so long tried for, and when it was certain that I was going up to college, Brother Hawkyard concluded a long exhortation thus:

'Well, my friends and fellow-sinners, now I told you when I began, that I didn't know a word of what I was going to say to you (and no, I did not!), but that it was all one to me, because I

knew the Lord would put into my mouth the words I wanted.'

('That's it!' from Brother Gimblet.)

'And he did put into my mouth the words I wanted.'

('So he did!' from Brother Gimblet.)

'And why?'

('Ah, let's have that!' from Brother Gimblet.)

'Because I have been his faithful servant for five-and-thirty years, and because he knows it. For five-and-thirty years! And he knows it, mind you! I got those words that I wanted on account of my wages. I got 'em from the Lord, my fellow-sinners. Down! I said, "Here's a heap of wages due; let us have something down, on account." And I got it down, and I paid it over to you; and you won't wrap it up in a napkin, nor yet in a towel, nor yet pocketankercher, but you'll put it out at good interest. Very well. Now, my brothers and sisters and fellow-sinners, I am going to conclude with a question, and I 'll make it so plain (with the help of the Lord, after five-and-thirty years, I should rather hope!) as that the Devil shall not be able to confuse it in your heads,—which he would be overjoyed to do.'

('Just his way. Crafty old blackguard!' from Brother Gimblet.)

'And the question is this, Are the angels learned?'

('Not they. Not a bit on it!' from Brother Gimblet, with the greatest confidence.)

'Not they. And where 's the proof? sent ready-made by the hand of the Lord. Why, there 's one among us here now, that has got all the learning that can be crammed into him. *I* got him all the learning that could be crammed into him. His grandfather' (this I had never heard before) 'was a brother of ours. He was Brother Parksop. That 's what he was. Parksop; Brother Parksop. His worldly name was Parksop, and he was a brother of this brotherhood. Then wasn't he Brother Parksop?'

('Must be. Couldn't help hisself!' from Brother Gimblet.)

'Well, he left that one now here present among us to the care of a brother-sinner of his (and that brother-sinner, mind you, was a sinner of a bigger size in his time than any of you; praise the Lord!), Brother Hawkyard. Me. *I* got him without fee or reward,—without a morsel of myrrh, or frankincense, nor yet am-

ber, letting alone the honeycomb,—all the learning that could be crammed into him. Has it brought him into our temple, in the spirit? No. Have we had any ignorant brothers and sisters that didn't know round O from crooked S, come in among us meanwhile? Many. Then the angels are *not* learned; then they don't so much as know their alphabet. And now, my friends and fellow-sinners, having brought it to that, perhaps some brother present—perhaps you, Brother Gimblet—will pray a bit for us?'

Brother Gimblet undertook the sacred function, after having drawn his sleeve across his mouth, and muttered, 'Well! I don't know as I see my way to hitting any of you quite in the right place neither.' He said this with a dark smile, and then began to bellow. What we were specially to be preserved from, according to his solicitations, was, despoilment of the orphan, suppression of testamentary intentions on the part of a father or (say) grandfather, appropriation of the orphan's house-property, feigning to give in charity to the wronged one from whom we withheld his due; and that class of sins. He ended with the petition, 'Give us peace!' which, speaking for myself, was very much needed after twenty minutes of his bellowing.

Even though I had not seen him when he rose from his knees, steaming with perspiration, glance at Brother Hawkyard, and even though I had not heard Brother Hawkyard's tone of congratulating him on the vigour with which he had roared, I should have detected a malicious application in this prayer. Unformed suspicions to a similar effect had sometimes passed through my mind in my earlier school-days, and had always caused me great distress; for they were worldly in their nature, and wide, very wide, of the spirit that had drawn me from Sylvia. They were sordid suspicions, without a shadow of proof. They were worthy to have originated in the unwholesome cellar. They were not only without proof, but against proof; for was I not myself a living proof of what Brother Hawkyard had done? and without him, how should I ever have seen the sky look sorrowfully down upon that wretched boy at Hoghton Towers?

Although the dread of a relapse into a stage of savage selfishness was less strong upon me as I approached manhood, and could act in an increased degree for myself, yet I was always on my

guard against any tendency to such relapse. After getting these suspicions under my feet, I had been troubled by not being able to like Brother Hawkyard's manner, or his professed religion. So it came about, that, as I walked back that Sunday evening, I thought it would be an act of reparation for any such injury my struggling thoughts had unwillingly done him, if I wrote, and placed in his hands, before going to college, a full acknowledgment of his goodness to me, and an ample tribute of thanks. It might serve as an implied vindication of him against any dark scandal from a rival brother and expounder, or from any other quarter.

Accordingly, I wrote the document with much care. I may add with much feeling too; for it affected me as I went on. Having no set studies to pursue, in the brief interval between leaving the Foundation and going to Cambridge, I determined to walk out to his place of business, and give it into his own hands.

It was a winter afternoon, when I tapped at the door of his little counting-house, which was at the farther end of his long, low shop. As I did so (having entered by the back yard, where casks and boxes were taken in, and where there was the inscription, 'Private way to the counting-house'), a shopman called to me from the counter that he was engaged.

'Brother Gimblet' (said the shopman, who was one of the brotherhood) 'is with him.'

I thought this all the better for my purpose, and made bold to tap again. They were talking in a low tone, and money was passing; for I heard it being counted out.

'Who is it?' said Brother Hawkyard, sharply.

'George Silverman,' I answered, holding the door open. 'May I come in?'

Both brothers seemed so astounded to see me that I felt shyer than usual. But they looked quite cadaverous in the early gaslight, and perhaps that accidental circumstance exaggerated the expression of their faces.

'What is the matter?' asked Brother Hawkyard.

'Ay! what is the matter?' asked Brother Gimblet.

'Nothing at all,' I said, diffidently producing my document: 'I am only the bearer of a letter from myself.'

'From yourself, George?' cried Brother Hawkyard.

'And to you,' said I.

'And to me, George?'

He turned paler, and opened it hurriedly; but looking over it, and seeing generally what it was, became less hurried, recovered his colour, and said, 'Praise the Lord!'

'That's it!' cried Brother Gimblet. 'Well put! Amen.'

Brother Hawkyard then said, in a livelier strain, 'You must know, George, that Brother Gimblet and I are going to make our two businesses one. We are going into partnership. We are settling it now. Brother Gimblet is to take one clear half of the profits (O, yes! he shall have it; he shall have it to the last farthing).'

'D.V.!' said Brother Gimblet, with his right fist firmly clinched on his right leg.

'There is no objection,' pursued Brother Hawkyard, 'to my reading this aloud, George?'

As it was what I expressly desired should be done, after yesterday's prayer, I more than readily begged him to read it aloud. He did so; and Brother Gimblet listened with a crabbed smile.

'It was in a good hour that I came here,' he said, wrinkling up his eyes. 'It was in a good hour, likewise, that I was moved yesterday to depict for the terror of evil-doers a character the direct opposite of Brother Hawkyard's. But it was the Lord that done it: I felt him at it while I was perspiring.'

After that it was proposed by both of them that I should attend the congregation once more before my final departure. What my shy reserve would undergo, from being expressly preached at and prayed at, I knew beforehand. But I reflected that it would be for the last time, and that it might add to the weight of my letter. It was well known to the brothers and sisters that there was no place taken for me in *their* paradise; and if I showed this last token of deference to Brother Hawkyard, notoriously in despite of my own sinful inclinations, it might go some little way in aid of my statement that he had been good to me, and that I was grateful to him. Merely stipulating, therefore, that no express endeavour should be made for my conversion,—which would involve the rolling of several brothers and sisters on the floor, declaring that they felt all their sins in a heap on their left side, weighing

so many pounds avoirdupois, as I knew from what I had seen of those repulsive mysteries,—I promised.

Since the reading of my letter, Brother Gimblet had been at intervals wiping one eye with an end of his spotted blue neckerchief, and grinning to himself. It was, however, a habit that brother had, to grin in an ugly manner even when expounding. I call to mind a delighted snarl with which he used to detail from the platform the torments reserved for the wicked (meaning all human creation except the brotherhood), as being remarkably hideous.

I left the two to settle their articles of partnership, and count money; and I never saw them again but on the following Sunday. Brother Hawkyard died within two or three years, leaving all he possessed to Brother Gimblet, in virtue of a will dated (as I have been told) that very day.

Now I was so far at rest with myself, when Sunday came, knowing that I had conquered my own mistrust, and righted Brother Hawkyard in the jaundiced vision of a rival, that I went, even to that coarse chapel, in a less sensitive state than usual. How could I foresee that the delicate, perhaps the diseased, corner of my mind, where I winced and shrunk when it was touched, or was even approached, would be handled as the theme of the whole proceedings?

On this occasion it was assigned to Brother Hawkyard to pray, and to Brother Gimblet to preach. The prayer was to open the ceremonies; the discourse was to come next. Brothers Hawkyard and Gimblet were both on the platform; Brother Hawkyard on his knees at the table, unmusically ready to pray; Brother Gimblet sitting against the wall, grinningly ready to preach.

'Let us offer up the sacrifice of prayer, my brothers and sisters and fellow-sinners.' Yes; but it was I who was the sacrifice. It was our poor, sinful, worldly-minded brother here present who was wrestled for. The now-opening career of this our unawakened brother might lead to his becoming a minister of what was called 'the church.' That was what *he* looked to. The church. Not the chapel, Lord. The church. No rectors, no vicars, no archdeacons, no bishops, no archbishops, in the chapel, but, O Lord! many such in the church. Protect our sinful brother from his love of

lucre. Cleanse from our unawakened brother's breast his sin of worldly-mindedness. The prayer said infinitely more in words, but nothing more to any intelligible effect.

Then Brother Gimblet came forward, and took (as I knew he would) the text, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' Ah! but whose was, my fellow-sinners? Whose? Why, our brother's here present was. The only kingdom he had an idea of was of this world ('That 's it!' from several of the congregation). What did the woman do when she lost the piece of money? Went and looked for it. What should our brother do when he lost his way? ('Go and look for it,' from a sister.) Go and look for it, true. But must he look for it in the right direction or in the wrong? ('In the right,' from a brother.) There spake the prophets! He must look for it in the right direction, or he couldn't find it. But he had turned his back upon the right direction, and he wouldn't find it. Now, my fellow-sinners, to show you the difference betwixt worldly-mindedness and unworldly-mindedness, betwixt kingdoms not of this world and kingdoms *of* this world, here was a letter wrote by even our worldly-minded brother unto Brother Hawkyard. Judge, from hearing of it read, whether Brother Hawkyard was the faithful steward that the Lord had in his mind only t' other day, when, in this very place, he drew you the picter of the unfaithful one; for it was him that done it, not me. Don't doubt that!

Brother Gimblet then groaned and bellowed his way through my composition, and subsequently through an hour. The service closed with a hymn, in which the brothers unanimously roared, and the sisters unanimously shrieked at me, That I by wiles of worldly gain was mocked, and they on waters of sweet love were rocked; that I with mammon struggled in the dark, while they were floating in a second ark.

I went out from all this with an aching heart and a weary spirit: not because I was quite so weak as to consider these narrow creatures interpreters of the Divine Majesty and Wisdom, but because I was weak enough to feel as though it were my hard fortune to be misrepresented and misunderstood, when I most tried to subdue any risings of mere worldliness within me, and when I most hoped that, by dint of trying earnestly, I had succeeded.

SEVENTH CHAPTER

My timidity and my obscurity occasioned me to live a secluded life at college, and to be little known. No relative ever came to visit me, for I had no relative. No intimate friends broke in upon my studies, for I made no intimate friends. I supported myself on my scholarship, and read much. My college time was otherwise not so very different from my time at Hoghton Towers.

Knowing myself to be unfit for the noisier stir of social existence, but believing myself qualified to do my duty in a moderate, though earnest way, if I could obtain some small preferment in the Church, I applied my mind to the clerical profession. In due sequence I took orders, was ordained, and began to look about me for employment. I must observe that I had taken a good degree, that I had succeeded in winning a good fellowship, and that my means were ample for my retired way of life. By this time I had read with several young men; and the occupation increased my income, while it was highly interesting to me. I once accidentally overheard our greatest don say, to my boundless joy, 'That he heard it reported of Silverman that his gift of quiet explanation, his patience, his amiable temper, and his conscientiousness made him the best of coaches.' May my 'gift of quiet explanation' come more seasonably and powerfully to my aid in this present explanation than I think it will!

It may be in a certain degree owing to the situation of my college-rooms (in a corner where the daylight was sobered), but it is in a much larger degree referable to the state of my own mind, that I seem to myself, on looking back to this time of my life, to have been always in the peaceful shade. I can see others in the sunlight; I can see our boats' crews and our athletic young men on the glistening water, or speckled with the moving lights of sunlit leaves; but I myself am always in the shadow looking on. Not unsympathetically—God forbid!—but looking on alone, much as I looked at Sylvia from the shadows of the ruined house, or looked at the red gleam shining through the farmer's windows, and listen-

ed to the fall of dancing feet, when all the ruin was dark that night in the quadrangle.

I now come to the reason of my quoting that laudation of myself above given. Without such reason, to repeat it would have been mere boastfulness.

Among those who had read with me was Mr. Fareway, second son of Lady Fareway, widow of Sir Gaston Fareway, baronet. This young gentleman's abilities were much above the average; but he came of a rich family and was idle and luxurious. He presented himself to me too late, and afterwards came to me too irregularly, to admit of my being of much service to him. In the end, I considered it my duty to dissuade him from going up for an examination which he could never pass; and he left college without a degree. After his departure, Lady Fareway wrote to me, representing the justice of my returning half my fee, as I had been of so little use to her son. Within my knowledge a similar demand had not been made in any other case; and I most freely admit that the justice of it had not occurred to me until it was pointed out. But I at once perceived it, yielded to it, and returned the money.

Mr. Fareway had been gone two years or more, and I had forgotten him, when he one day walked into my rooms as I was sitting at my books.

Said he, after the usual salutations had passed, 'Mr. Silverman, my mother is in town here, at the hotel, and wishes me to present you to her.'

I was not comfortable with strangers, and I daresay I betrayed that I was a little nervous or unwilling. 'For,' said he, without my having spoken, 'I think the interview may tend to the advancement of your prospects.'

It put me to the blush to think that I should be tempted by a worldly reason, and I rose immediately.

Said Mr. Fareway, as we went along, 'Are you a good hand at business?'

'I think not,' said I.

Said Mr. Fareway then, 'My mother is.'

'Truly?' said I.

'Yes; my mother is what is usually called a managing woman.

Doesn't make a bad thing, for instance, even out of the spendthrift habits of my eldest brother abroad. In short, a managing woman. This is in confidence.'

He had never spoken to me in confidence, and I was surprised by his doing so. I said I should respect his confidence, of course, and said no more on the delicate subject. We had but a little way to walk, and I was soon in his mother's company. He presented me, shook hands with me, and left us two (as he said) to business.

I saw in my Lady Fareway a handsome, well-preserved lady of somewhat large stature, with a steady glare in her great round dark eyes that embarrassed me.

Said my lady, 'I have heard from my son, Mr. Silverman, that you would be glad of some preferment in the church.'

I gave my lady to understand that was so.

'I don't know whether you are aware,' my lady proceeded, 'that we have a presentation to a living? I say *we* have; but, in point of fact, *I* have.'

I gave my lady to understand that I had not been aware of this.

Said my lady, 'So it is: indeed I have two presentations,—one to two hundred a year, one to six. Both livings are in our country,—North Devonshire,—as you probably know. The first is vacant. Would you like it?'

What with my lady's eyes, and what with the suddenness of this proposed gift, I was much confused.

'I am sorry it is not the larger presentation,' said my lady, rather coldly; 'though I will not, Mr. Silverman, pay you the bad compliment of supposing that *you* are, because that would be mercenary,—and mercenary I am persuaded you are not.'

Said I, with my utmost earnestness, 'Thank you, Lady Fareway, thank you, thank you! I should be deeply hurt if I thought I bore the character.'

'Naturally,' said my lady. 'Always detestable, but particularly in a clergyman. You have not said whether you will like the living?'

With apologies for my remissness or indistinctness, I assured my lady that I accepted it most readily and gratefully. I added that I hoped she would not estimate my appreciation of the generosity of her choice by my flow of words: for I was not a

ready man in that respect when taken by surprise or touched at heart.

'The affair is concluded,' said my lady; 'concluded. You will find the duties very light, Mr. Silverman. Charming house; charming little garden, orchard, and all that. You will be able to take pupils. By the bye! No: I will return to the word afterwards. What was I going to mention, when it put me out?'

My lady stared at me as if I knew. And I didn't know. And that perplexed me afresh.

Said my lady, after some consideration, 'O, of course, how very dull of me! The last incumbent—least mercenary man I ever saw,—in consideration of the duties being so light and the house so delicious, couldn't rest, he said, unless I permitted him to help me with my correspondence, accounts, and various little things of that kind; nothing in themselves, but which it worries a lady to cope with. Would Mr. Silverman also like to—? Or shall I—?'

I hastened to say that my poor help would be always at her ladyship's service.

'I am absolutely blessed,' said my lady, casting up her eyes (and so taking them off me for one moment), 'in having to do with gentlemen who cannot endure an approach to the idea of being mercenary!' She shivered at the word. 'And now as to the pupil.'

'The—?' I was quite at a loss.

'Mr. Silverman, you have no idea what she is. She is,' said my lady, laying her touch upon my coat-sleeve, 'I do verily believe, the most extraordinary girl in this world. Already knows more Greek and Latin than Lady Jane Grey. And taught herself! Has not yet, remember, derived a moment's advantage from Mr. Silverman's classical acquirements. To say nothing of mathematics, which she is bent upon becoming versed in, and in which (as I hear from my son and others) Mr. Silverman's reputation is so deservedly high!'

Under my lady's eyes I must have lost the clue, I felt persuaded; and yet I did not know where I could have dropped it.

'Adelina,' said my lady, 'is my only daughter. If I did not feel quite convinced that I am not blinded by a mother's partiality; unless I was absolutely sure that when you know her, Mr. Silver-

man, you will esteem it a high and unusual privilege to direct her, studies,—I should introduce a mercenary element into this conversation, and ask you on what terms—'

I entreated the lady to go no further. My lady saw that I was troubled, and did me the honour to comply with my request.

EIGHTH CHAPTER

Everything in mental acquisition that her brother might have been, if he would, and everything in all gracious charms and admirable qualities that no one but herself could be,—this was Adelina.

I will not expatiate upon her beauty; I will not expatiate upon her intelligence, her quickness of perception, her powers of memory, her sweet consideration, from the first moment, for the slow-paced tutor who ministered to her wonderful gifts. I was thirty then; I am over sixty now: she is ever present to me in these hours as she was in those, bright and beautiful and young, wise and fanciful and good.

When I discovered that I loved her, how can I say? In the first day? in the first week? in the first month? Impossible to trace. If I be (as I am) unable to represent to myself any previous period of my life as quite separable from her attracting power, how can I answer for this one detail?

Whensoever I made the discovery, it laid a heavy burden on me. And yet, comparing it with the far heavier burden that I afterwards took up, it does not seem to me now to have been very hard to bear. In the knowledge that I did love her, and that I should love her while my life lasted, and that I was ever to hide my secret deep in my own breast, and she was never to find it, there was a kind of sustaining joy or pride, or comfort, mingled with my pain.

But later on,—say a year later on,—when I made another discovery, then indeed my suffering and my struggle were strong. That other discovery was—

These words will never see the light, if ever, until my heart is

dust; until her bright spirit has returned to the regions of which, when imprisoned here, it surely retained some unusual glimpse of remembrance; until all the pulses that ever beat around us shall have long been quiet; until all the fruits of all the tiny victories and defeats achieved in our little breasts shall have withered away. That discovery was that she loved me.

She may have enhanced my knowledge, and loved me for that; she may have over-valued my discharge of duty to her, and loved me for that; she may have refined upon a playful compassion which she would sometimes show for what she called my want of wisdom, according to the light of the world's dark lanterns, and loved me for that; she may—she must—have confused the borrowed light of what I had only learned, with its brightness in its pure, original rays; but she loved me at that time, and she made me know it.

Pride of family and pride of wealth put me as far off from her in my lady's eyes as if I had been some domesticated creature of another kind. But they could not put me further from her than I put myself when I set my merits against hers. More than that. They could not put me, by millions of fathoms, half so low beneath her as I put myself when in imagination I took advantage of her noble trustfulness, took the fortune that I knew she must possess in her own right, and left her to find herself, in the zenith of her beauty and genius, bound to poor rusty, plodding me.

No! Worldliness should not enter here at any cost. If I had tried to keep it out of other ground, how much harder was I bound to try to keep it out from this sacred place!

But there was something daring in her broad, generous character, that demanded at so delicate a crisis to be delicately and patiently addressed. After many and many a bitter night (O, I found I could cry for reasons not purely physical, at this pass of my life!) I took my course.

My lady had, in our first interview, unconsciously overstated the accommodation of my pretty house. There was room in it for only one pupil. He was a young gentleman near coming of age, very well connected, but what is called a poor relation. His parents were dead. The charges of his living and reading with me were defrayed by an uncle; and he and I were to do our utmost

together for three years towards qualifying him to make his way. At this time he had entered into his second year with me. He was well-looking, clever, energetic, enthusiastic, bold; in the best sense of the term, a thorough young Anglo-Saxon.

I resolved to bring these two together.

NINTH CHAPTER

Said I, one night, when I had conquered myself, 'Mr. Granville,' —Mr. Granville Wharton his name was,—'I doubt if you have ever yet so much as seen Miss Fareway.'

'Well, sir,' returned he, laughing, 'you see her so much yourself, that you hardly leave another fellow a chance of seeing her.'

'I am her tutor, you know,' said I.

And there the subject dropped for that time. But I so contrived as that they should come together shortly afterwards. I had previously so contrived as to keep them asunder; for while I loved her,—I mean before I had determined on my sacrifice,—a lurking jealousy of Mr. Granville lay within my unworthy breast.

It was quite an ordinary interview in the Fareway Park; but they talked easily together for some time: like takes to like, and they had many points of resemblance. Said Mr. Granville to me, when he and I sat at our supper that night, 'Miss Fareway is remarkably beautiful, sir, remarkably engaging. Don't you think so?' 'I think so,' said I. And I stole a glance at him, and saw that he had reddened and was thoughtful. I remember it most vividly, because the mixed feeling of grave pleasure and acute pain that the slight circumstance caused me was the first of a long, long series of such mixed impressions under which my hair turned slowly gray.

I had not much need to feign to be subdued; but I counterfeited to be older than I was in all respects (Heaven knows! my heart being all too young the while), and feigned to be more of a recluse and bookworm than I had really become, and gradually set up more and more of a fatherly manner towards Adelina. Likewise I made my tuition less imaginative than before; sepa-

rated myself from my poets and philosophers; was careful to present them in their own light, and me, their lowly servant, in my own shade. Moreover, in the matter of apparel I was equally mindful; not that I had ever been dapper that way; but that I was slovenly now.

As I depressed myself with one hand, so did I labour to raise Mr. Granville with the other; directing his attention to such subjects as I too well knew most interested her, and fashioning him (do not deride or misconstrue the expression, unknown reader of this writing; for I have suffered!) into a greater resemblance to myself in my solitary one strong aspect. And gradually, gradually, as I saw him take more and more to these thrown-out lures of mine, then did I come to know better and better that love was drawing him on, and was drawing her from me.

So passed more than another year; every day a year in its number of my mixed impressions of grave pleasure and acute pain; and then these two, being of age and free to act legally for themselves, came before me hand in hand (my hair being now quite white), and entreated me that I would unite them together. 'And indeed, dear tutor,' said Adelina, 'it is but consistent in you that you should do this thing for us, seeing that we should never have spoken together that first time but for you, and that but for you we could never have met so often afterwards.' The whole of which was literally true; for I had availed myself of my many business attendances on, and conferences with, my lady, to take Mr. Granville to the house, and leave him in the outer room with Adelina.

I knew that my lady would object to such a marriage for her daughter, or to any marriage that was other than an exchange of her for stipulated lands, goods, and moneys. But looking on the two, and seeing with full eyes that they were both young and beautiful; and knowing that they were alike in the tastes and acquirements that will outlive youth and beauty; and considering that Adelina had a fortune now, in her own keeping; and considering further that Mr. Granville, though for the present poor, was of a good family that had never lived in a cellar in Preston; and believing that their love would endure, neither having any great discrepancy to find out in the other,—I told them of my readiness

to do this thing which Adelina asked of her dear tutor, and to send them forth, husband and wife, into the shining world with golden gates that awaited them.

It was on a summer morning that I rose before the sun to compose myself for the crowning of my work with this end; and my dwelling being near the sea, I walked down to the rocks on the shore, in order that I might behold the sun in his majesty.

The tranquillity upon the deep, and on the firmament, the orderly withdrawal of the stars, the calm promise of coming day, the rosy suffusion of the sky and waters, the ineffable splendour that then burst forth, attuned my mind afresh after the discords of the night. Methought that all I looked on said to me, and that all I heard in the sea and in the air said to me, 'Be comforted, mortal, that thy life is so short. Our preparation for what is to follow has endured, and shall endure, for unimaginable ages.'

I married them. I knew that my hand was cold when I placed it on their hands clasped together; but the words with which I had to accompany the action I could say without faltering, and I was at peace.

They being well away from my house and from the place after our simple breakfast, the time was come when I must do what I had pledged myself to them that I would do,—break the intelligence to my lady.

I went up to the house, and found my lady in her ordinary business-room. She happened to have an unusual amount of commissions to intrust to me that day; and she had filled my hands with papers before I could originate a word.

'My lady,' I then began, as I stood beside her table.

'Why, what 's the matter?' she said quickly, looking up.

'Not much, I would fain hope, after you shall have prepared yourself, and considered a little.'

'Prepared myself; and considered a little! You appear to have prepared *your*self but indifferently, anyhow, Mr. Silverman.' This mighty scornfully, as I experienced my usual embarrassment under her stare.

Said I, in self-extenuation once for all, 'Lady Fareway, I have but to say for myself that I have tried to do my duty.'

'For yourself?' repeated my lady. 'Then there are others concerned, I see. Who are they?'

I was about to answer, when she made towards the bell with a dart that stopped me, and said, 'Why, where is Adelina?'

'Forbear! be calm, my lady. I married her this morning to Mr. Granville Wharton.'

She set her lips, looked more intently at me than ever, raised her right hand, and smote me hard upon the cheek.

'Give me back those papers! give me back those papers!' She tore them out of my hands, and tossed them on her table. Then seating herself defiantly in her great chair, and folding her arms, she stabbed me to the heart with the unlooked-for reproach, 'You worldly wretch!'

'Worldly?' I cried. 'Worldly?'

'This, if you please,'—she went on with supreme scorn, pointing me out as if there were some one there to see,—'this, if you please, is the disinterested scholar, with not a design beyond his books! This, if you please, is the simple creature whom any one could overreach in a bargain! This, if you please, is Mr. Silverman! Not of this world; not he! He has too much simplicity for this world's cunning. He has too much singleness of purpose to be a match for this world's double-dealing. What did he give you for it?'

'For what? And who?'

'How much,' she asked, bending forward in her great chair, and insultingly tapping the fingers of her right hand on the palm of her left,—'how much does Mr. Granville Wharton pay you for getting him Adelina's money? What is the amount of your percentage upon Adelina's fortune? What were the terms of the agreement that you proposed to this boy when you, the Rev. George Silverman, licensed to marry, engaged to put him in possession of this girl? You made good terms for yourself, whatever they were. He would stand a poor chance against your keenness.'

Bewildered, horrified, stunned by this cruel perversion, I could not speak. But I trust that I looked innocent, being so.

'Listen to me, shrewd hypocrite,' said my lady, whose anger increased as she gave it utterance; 'attend to my words, you cun-

ning schemer, who have carried this plot through with such a practised double face that I have never suspected you. I had my projects for my daughter; projects for family connection; projects for fortune. You have thwarted them, and overreached me; but I am not one to be thwarted and overreached without retaliation. Do you mean to hold this living another month?'

'Do you deem it possible, Lady Fareway, that I can hold it another hour, under your injurious words?'

'Is it resigned, then?'

'It was mentally resigned, my lady, some minutes ago.'

'Don't equivocate, sir. *Is* it resigned?'

'Unconditionally and entirely; and I would that I had never, never come near it!'

'A cordial response from me to *that* wish, Mr. Silverman! But take this with you, sir. If you had not resigned it, I would have had you deprived of it. And though you have resigned it, you will not get quit of me as easily as you think for. I will pursue you with this story. I will make this nefarious conspiracy of yours, for money, known. You have made money by it, but you have at the same time made an enemy by it. *You* will take good care that the money stick to you; I will take good care that the enemy sticks to you.'

Then said I finally, 'Lady Fareway, I think my heart is broken. Until I came into this room just now, the possibility of such mean wickedness as you have imputed to me never dawned upon my thoughts. Your suspicions—'

'Suspicions! Pah!' said she indignantly. 'Certainties.'

'Your certainties, my lady, as you call them, your suspicions as I call them, are cruel, unjust, wholly devoid of foundation in fact. I can declare no more; except that I have not acted for my own profit or my own pleasure. I have not in this proceeding considered myself. Once again, I think my heart is broken. If I have unwittingly done any wrong with a righteous motive, that is some penalty to pay.'

She received this with another and more indignant 'Pah!' and I made my way out of her room (I think I felt my way out with my hands, although my eyes were open), almost suspecting that

my voice had a repulsive sound, and that I was a repulsive object.

There was a great stir made, the bishop was appealed to, I received a severe reprimand, and narrowly escaped suspension. For years a cloud hung over me, and my name was tarnished. But my heart did not break, if a broken heart involves death; for I lived through it.

They stood by me, Adelina and her husband, through it all Those who had known me at college, and even most of those who had only known me there by reputation, stood by me too. Little by little, the belief widened that I was not capable of what was laid to my charge. At length I was presented to a college-living in a sequestered place, and there I now pen my explanation. I pen it at my open window in the summer-time, before me lying the churchyard, equal resting-place for sound hearts, wounded hearts, and broken hearts. I pen it for the relief of my own mind, not foreseeing whether or no it will ever have a reader.

THE END

HOLIDAY ROMANCE

HOLIDAY ROMANCE

IN FOUR PARTS

PART I

INTRODUCTORY ROMANCE FROM THE PEN OF WILLIAM TINKLING, ESQ.[1]

THIS beginning-part is not made out of anybody's head, you know. It's real. You must believe this beginning-part more than what comes after, else you won't understand how what comes after came to be written. You must believe it all; but you must believe this most, please. I am the editor of it. Bob Redforth (he's my cousin, and shaking the table on purpose) wanted to be the editor of it; but I said he shouldn't because he couldn't. *He* has no idea of being an editor.

Nettie Ashford is my bride. We were married in the right-hand closet in the corner of the dancing-school, where first we met, with a ring (a green one) from Wilkingwater's toy-shop. *I* owed for it out of my pocket-money. When the rapturous ceremony was over, we all four went up the lane and let off a cannon (brought loaded in Bob Redforth's waistcoat-pocket) to announce our nuptials. It flew right up when it went off, and turned over. Next day, Lieut.-Col. Robin Redforth was united, with similar ceremonies, to Alice Rainbird. This time the cannon burst with a most terrific explosion, and made a puppy bark.

My peerless bride was, at the period of which we now treat, in captivity at Miss Grimmer's. Drowvey and Grimmer is the partnership, and opinion is divided which is the greatest beast. The

[1] Aged eight.

lovely bride of the colonel was also immured in the dungeons of the same establishment. A vow was entered into, between the colonel and myself, that we would cut them out on the following Wednesday when walking two and two.

Under the desperate circumstances of the case, the active brain of the colonel, combining with his lawless pursuit (he is a pirate), suggested an attack with fireworks. This, however, from motives of humanity, was abandoned as too expensive.

Lightly armed with a paper-knife buttoned up under his jacket, and waving the dreaded black flag at the end of a cane, the colonel took command of me at two P.M. on the eventful and appointed day. He had drawn out the plan of attack on a piece of paper, which was rolled up round a hoop-stick. He showed it to me. My position and my full-length portrait (but my real ears don't stick out horizontal) was behind a corner lamp-post, with written orders to remain there till I should see Miss Drowvey fall. The Drowvey who was to fall was the one in spectacles, not the one with the large lavender bonnet. At that signal I was to rush forth, seize my bride, and fight my way to the lane. There a junction would be effected between myself and the colonel; and putting our brides behind us, between ourselves and the palings, we were to conquer or die.

The enemy appeared,—approached. Waving his black flag, the colonel attacked. Confusion ensued. Anxiously I awaited my signal; but my signal came not. So far from falling, the hated Drowvey in spectacles appeared to me to have muffled the colonel's head in his outlawed banner, and to be pitching into him with a parasol. The one in the lavender bonnet also performed prodigies of valour with her fists on his back. Seeing that all was for the moment lost, I fought my desperate way hand to hand to the lane. Through taking the back road, I was so fortunate as to meet nobody, and arrived there uninterrupted.

It seemed an age ere the colonel joined me. He had been to the jobbing tailor's to be sewn up in several places, and attributed our defeat to the refusal of the detested Drowvey to fall. Finding her so obstinate, he had said to her 'Die, recreant!' but had found her no more open to reason on that point than the other.

My blooming bride appeared, accompanied by the colonel's

bride, at the dancing-school next day. What? Was her face averted from me? Hah? Even so. With a look of scorn, she put into my hand a bit of paper, and took another partner. On the paper was pencilled, 'Heavens! Can I write the word? Is my husband a cow?'

In the first bewilderment of my heated brain, I tried to think what slanderer could have traced my family to the ignoble animal mentioned above. Vain were my endeavours. At the end of that dance I whispered the colonel to come into the cloak-room, and I showed him the note.

'There is a syllable wanting,' said he, with a gloomy brow.

'Hah! What syllable?' was my inquiry.

'She asks, can she write the word? And no; you see she couldn't,' said the colonel, pointing out the passage.

'And the word was?' said I.

'Cow—cow—coward,' hissed the pirate-colonel in my ear, and gave me back the note.

Feeling that I must for ever tread the earth a branded boy,—person I mean,—or that I must clear up my honour, I demanded to be tried by a court-martial. The colonel admitted my right to be tried. Some difficulty was found in composing the court, on account of the Emperor of France's aunt refusing to let him come out. He was to be the president. Ere yet we had appointed a substitute, he made his escape over the back-wall, and stood among us, a free monarch.

The court was held on the grass by the pond. I recognised, in a certain admiral among my judges, my deadliest foe. A cocoa-nut had given rise to language that I could not brook; but confiding in my innocence, and also in the knowledge that the President of the United States (who sat next him) owed me a knife, I braced myself for the ordeal.

It was a solemn spectacle, that court. Two executioners with pinafores reversed led me in. Under the shade of an umbrella I perceived my bride, supported by the bride of the pirate-colonel. The president, having reproved a little female ensign for tittering, on a matter of life or death, called upon me to plead, 'Coward or no coward, guilty or not guilty?' I pleaded in a firm tone, 'No coward and not guilty.' (The little female ensign being again re-

proved by the president for misconduct, mutinied, left the court, and threw stones.)

My implacable enemy, the admiral, conducted the case against me. The colonel's bride was called to prove that I had remained behind the corner lamp-post during the engagement. I might have been spared the anguish of my own bride's being also made a witness to the same point, but the admiral knew where to wound me. Be still my soul, no matter. The colonel was then brought forward with his evidence.

It was for this point that I had saved myself up, as the turning-point of my case. Shaking myself free of my guards,—who had no business to hold me, the stupids, unless I was found guilty,—I asked the colonel what he considered the first duty of a soldier? Ere he could reply, the President of the United States rose and informed the court, that my foe, the admiral, had suggested 'Bravery,' and that prompting a witness wasn't fair. The president of the court immediately ordered the admiral's mouth to be filled with leaves, and tied up with string. I had the satisfaction of seeing the sentence carried into effect before the proceedings went further.

I then took a paper from my trousers-pocket, and asked, 'What do you consider, Col. Redforth, the first duty of a soldier? Is it obedience?'

'It is,' said the colonel.

'Is that paper—please to look at it—in your hand?'

'It is,' said the colonel.

'Is it a military sketch?'

'It is,' said the colonel.

'Of an engagement?'

'Quite so,' said the colonel.

'Of the late engagement?'

'Of the late engagement.'

'Please to describe it, and then hand it to the president of the court.'

From that triumphant moment my sufferings and my dangers were at an end. The court rose up and jumped, on discovering that I had strictly obeyed orders. My foe, the admiral, who though muzzled was malignant yet, contrived to suggest that I

was dishonoured by having quitted the field. But the colonel himself had done as much, and gave his opinion, upon his word and honour as a pirate, that when all was lost the field might be quitted without disgrace. I was going to be found 'No coward and not guilty,' and my blooming bride was going to be publicly restored to my arms in a procession, when an unlooked-for event disturbed the general rejoicing. This was no other than the Emperor of France's aunt catching hold of his hair. The proceedings abruptly terminated, and the court tumultuously dissolved.

It was when the shades of the next evening but one were beginning to fall, ere yet the silver beams of Luna touched the earth, that four forms might have been descried slowly advancing towards the weeping willow on the borders of the pond, the now deserted scene of the day before yesterday's agonies and triumphs. On a nearer approach, and by a practised eye, these might have been identified as the forms of the pirate-colonel with his bride, and of the day before yesterday's gallant prisoner with his bride.

On the beauteous faces of the Nymphs dejection sat enthroned. All four reclined under the willow for some minutes without speaking, till at length the bride of the colonel poutingly observed, 'It 's of no use pretending any more, and we had better give it up.'

'Hah!' exclaimed the pirate. 'Pretending?'

'Don't go on like that; you worry me,' returned his bride.

The lovely bride of Tinkling echoed the incredible declaration. The two warriors exchanged stony glances.

'If,' said the bride of the pirate-colonel, 'grown-up people WON'T do what they ought to do, and WILL put us out, what comes of our pretending?'

'We only get into scrapes,' said the bride of Tinkling.

'You know very well,' pursued the colonel's bride, 'that Miss Drowvey wouldn't fall. You complained of it yourself. And you know how disgracefully the court-martial ended. As to our marriage; would my people acknowledge it at home?'

'Or would my people acknowledge ours?' said the bride of Tinkling.

Again the two warriors exchanged stony glances.

'If you knocked at the door and claimed me, after you were told to go away,' said the colonel's bride, 'you would only have your hair pulled, or your ears, or your nose.'

'If you persisted in ringing at the bell and claiming me,' said the bride of Tinkling to that gentleman, 'you would have things dropped on your head from the window over the handle, or you would be played upon by the garden-engine.'

'And at your own homes,' resumed the bride of the colonel, 'it would be just as bad. You would be sent to bed, or something equally undignified. Again, how would you support us?'

The pirate-colonel replied in a courageous voice, 'By rapine!' But his bride retorted, 'Suppose the grown-up people wouldn't be rapined?' 'Then,' said the colonel, 'they should pay the penalty in blood.'—'But suppose they should object,' retorted his bride, 'and wouldn't pay the penalty in blood or anything else?'

A mournful silence ensued.

'Then do you no longer love me, Alice?' asked the colonel.

'Redforth! I am ever thine,' returned his bride.

'Then do you no longer love me, Nettie?' asked the present writer.

'Tinkling! I am ever thine,' returned my bride.

We all four embraced. Let me not be misunderstood by the giddy. The colonel embraced his own bride, and I embraced mine. But two times two make four.

'Nettie and I,' said Alice mournfully, 'have been considering our position. The grown-up people are too strong for us. They make us ridiculous. Besides, they have changed the times. William Tinkling's baby brother was christened yesterday. What took place? Was any king present? Answer, William.'

I said No, unless disguised as Great-uncle Chopper.

'Any queen?'

There had been no queen that I knew of at our house. There might have been one in the kitchen: but I didn't think so, or the servants would have mentioned it.

'Any fairies?'

None that were visible.

'We had an idea among us, I think,' said Alice, with a melancholy smile, 'we four, that Miss Grimmer would prove to be the

wicked fairy, and would come in at the christening with her crutch-stick, and give the child a bad gift. Was there anything of that sort? Answer, William.'

I said that ma had said afterwards (and so she had), that Great-uncle Chopper's gift was a shabby one; but she hadn't said a bad one. She had called it shabby, electrotyped, second-hand, and below his income.

'It must be the grown-up people who have changed all this,' said Alice. '*We* couldn't have changed it, if we had been so inclined, and we never should have been. Or perhaps Miss Grimmer *is* a wicked fairy after all, and won't act up to it because the grown-up people have persuaded her not to. Either way, they would make us ridiculous if we told them what we expected.'

'Tyrants!' muttered the pirate-colonel.

'Nay, my Redforth,' said Alice, 'say not so. Call not names, my Redforth, or they will apply to pa.'

'Let 'em,' said the colonel. 'I don't care. Who's he?'

Tinkling here undertook the perilous task of remonstrating with his lawless friend, who consented to withdraw the moody expressions above quoted.

'What remains for us to do?' Alice went on in her mild, wise way. 'We must educate, we must pretend in a new manner, we must wait.'

The colonel clenched his teeth—four out in front, and a piece of another, and he had been twice dragged to the door of a dentist-despot, but had escaped from his guards. 'How educate? How pretend in a new manner? How wait?'

'Educate the grown-up people,' replied Alice. 'We part to-night. Yes, Redforth,'—for the colonel tucked up his cuffs,—'part to-night! Let us in these next holidays, now going to begin, throw our thoughts into something educational for the grown-up people, hinting to them how things ought to be. Let us veil our meaning under a mask of romance; you, I, and Nettie. William Tinkling being the plainest and quickest writer, shall copy out. Is it agreed?'

The colonel answered sulkily, 'I don't mind.' He then asked, 'How about pretending?'

'We will pretend,' said Alice, 'that we are children; not that

we are those grown-up people who won't help us out as they ought, and who understand us so badly.'

The colonel, still much dissatisfied, growled, 'How about waiting?'

'We will wait,' answered little Alice, taking Nettie's hand in hers, and looking up to the sky, 'we will wait—ever constant and true—till the times have got so changed as that everything helps us out, and nothing makes us ridiculous, and the fairies have come back. We will wait—ever constant and true—till we are eighty, ninety, or one hundred. And then the fairies will send *us* children, and we will help them out, poor pretty little creatures, if they pretend ever so much.'

'So we will, dear,' said Nettie Ashford, taking her round the waist with both arms and kissing her. 'And now if my husband will go and buy some cherries for us, I have got some money.'

In the friendliest manner I invited the colonel to go with me; but he so far forgot himself as to acknowledge the invitation by kicking out behind, and then lying down on his stomach on the grass, pulling it up and chewing it. When I came back, however, Alice had nearly brought him out of his vexation, and was soothing him by telling him how soon we should all be ninety.

As we sat under the willow-tree and ate the cherries (fair, for Alice shared them out), we played at being ninety. Nettie complained that she had a bone in her old back, and it made her hobble; and Alice sang a song in an old woman's way, but it was very pretty, and we were all merry. At least, I don't know about merry exactly, but all comfortable.

There was a most tremendous lot of cherries; and Alice always had with her some neat little bag or box or case, to hold things. In it that night was a tiny wine-glass. So Alice and Nettie said they would make some cherry-wine to drink our love at parting.

Each of us had a glassful, and it was delicious; and each of us drank the toast, 'Our love at parting.' The colonel drank his wine last; and it got into my head directly that it got into his directly. Anyhow, his eyes rolled immediately after he had turned the glass upside down; and he took me on one side and proposed in a hoarse whisper, that we should 'Cut 'em out still.'

'How did he mean?' I asked my lawless friend.

'Cut our brides out,' said the colonel, 'and then cut our way, without going down a single turning, bang to the Spanish main!'

We might have tried it, though I didn't think it would answer; only we looked round and saw that there was nothing but moonlight under the willow-tree, and that our pretty, pretty wives were gone. We burst out crying. The colonel gave in second, and came to first; but he gave in strong.

We were ashamed of our red eyes, and hung about for half an hour to whiten them. Likewise a piece of chalk round the rims, I doing the colonel's, and he mine, but afterwards found in the bedroom looking-glass not natural, besides inflammation. Our conversation turned on being ninety. The colonel told me he had a pair of boots that wanted soling and heeling; but he thought it hardly worth while to mention it to his father, as he himself should so soon be ninety, when he thought shoes would be more convenient. The colonel also told me, with his hand upon his hip, that he felt himself already getting on in life, and turning rheumatic. And I told him the same. And when they said at our house at supper (they are always bothering about something) that I stooped, I felt so glad!

This is the end of the beginning-part that you were to believe most.

PART II

ROMANCE. FROM THE PEN OF MISS ALICE RAINBIRD [1]

THERE was once a king, and he had a queen; and he was the manliest of his sex, and she was the loveliest of hers. The king was, in his private profession, under government. The queen's father had been a medical man out of town.

They had nineteen children, and were always having more. Seventeen of these children took care of the baby; and Alicia, the eldest, took care of them all. Their ages varied from seven years to seven months.

Let us now resume our story.

[1] Aged seven.

One day the king was going to the office, when he stopped at the fishmonger's to buy a pound and a half of salmon not too near the tail, which the queen (who was a careful housekeeper) had requested him to send home. Mr. Pickles, the fishmonger, said, 'Certainly, sir; is there any other article? Good-morning.'

The king went on towards the office in a melancholy mood; for quarter-day was such a long way off, and several of the dear children were growing out of their clothes. He had not proceeded far, when Mr. Pickles's errand-boy came running after him, and said, 'Sir, you didn't notice the old lady in our shop.'

'What old lady?' inquired the king. 'I saw none.'

Now the king had not seen any old lady, because this old lady had been invisible to him, though visible to Mr. Pickles's boy. Probably because he messed and splashed the water about to that degree, and flopped the pairs of soles down in that violent manner, that, if she had not been visible to him, he would have spoilt her clothes.

Just then the old lady came trotting up. She was dressed in shot-silk of the richest quality, smelling of dried lavender.

'King Watkins the First, I believe?' said the old lady.

'Watkins,' replied the king, 'is my name.'

'Papa, if I am not mistaken, of the beautiful Princess Alicia?'

'And of eighteen other darlings,' replied the king.

'Listen. You are going to the office,' said the old lady.

It instantly flashed upon the king that she must be a fairy, or how could she know that?

'You are right,' said the old lady, answering his thoughts. 'I am the good Fairy Grandmarina. Attend! When you return home to dinner, politely invite the Princess Alicia to have some of the salmon you bought just now.'

'It may disagree with her,' said the king.

The old lady became so very angry at this absurd idea, that the king was quite alarmed, and humbly begged her pardon.

'We hear a great deal too much about this thing disagreeing, and that thing disagreeing,' said the old lady, with the greatest contempt it was possible to express. 'Don't be greedy. I think you want it all yourself.'

The king hung his head under this reproof, and said he wouldn't talk about things disagreeing any more.

'Be good, then,' said the Fairy Grandmarina, 'and don't. When the beautiful Princess Alicia consents to partake of the salmon,—as I think she will,—you will find she will leave a fish-bone on her plate. Tell her to dry it, and to rub it, and to polish it till it shines like mother-of-pearl, and to take care of it as a present from me.'

'Is that all?' asked the king.

'Don't be impatient, sir,' returned the Fairy Grandmarina, scolding him severely. 'Don't catch people short, before they have done speaking. Just the way with you grown-up persons. You are always doing it.'

The king again hung his head, and said he wouldn't do so any more.

'Be good, then,' said the Fairy Grandmarina, 'and don't! Tell the Princess Alicia, with my love, that the fish-bone is a magic present which can only be used once; but that it will bring her, that once, whatever she wishes for, PROVIDED SHE WISHES FOR IT AT THE RIGHT TIME. That is the message. Take care of it.'

The king was beginning, 'Might I ask the reason?' when the fairy became absolutely furious.

'*Will* you be good, sir?' she exclaimed, stamping her foot on the ground. 'The reason for this, and the reason for that, indeed! You are always wanting the reason. No reason. There! Hoity toity me! I am sick of your grown-up reasons.'

The king was extremely frightened by the old lady's flying into such a passion, and said he was very sorry to have offended her, and he wouldn't ask for reasons any more.

'Be good, then,' said the old lady, 'and don't!'

With those words, Grandmarina vanished, and the king went on and on and on, till he came to the office. There he wrote and wrote and wrote, till it was time to go home again. Then he politely invited the Princess Alicia, as the fairy had directed him, to partake of the salmon. And when he had enjoyed it very much, he saw the fish-bone on her plate, as the fairy had told him he would, and he delivered the fairy's message, and the Princess Alicia took care to dry the bone, and to rub it, and to polish it, till it shone like mother-of-pearl.

And so, when the queen was going to get up in the morning, she said, 'O dear me, dear me; my head, my head!' and then she fainted away.

The Princess Alicia, who happened to be looking in at the chamber-door, asking about breakfast, was very much alarmed when she saw her royal mamma in this state, and she rang the bell for Peggy, which was the name of the lord chamberlain. But remembering where the smelling-bottle was, she climbed on a chair and got it; and after that she climbed on another chair by the bedside, and held the smelling-bottle to the queen's nose; and after that she jumped down and got some water; and after that she jumped up again and wetted the queen's forehead; and, in short, when the lord chamberlain came in, that dear old woman said to the little princess, 'What a trot you are! I couldn't have done it better myself!'

But that was not the worst of the good queen's illness. O, no! She was very ill indeed, for a long time. The Princess Alicia kept the seventeen young princes and princesses quiet, and dressed and undressed and danced the baby, and made the kettle boil, and heated the soup, and swept the hearth, and poured out the medicine, and nursed the queen, and did all that ever she could, and was as busy, busy, busy as busy could be; for there were not many servants at that palace for three reasons: because the king was short of money, because a rise in his office never seemed to come, and because quarter-day was so far off that it looked almost as far off and as little as one of the stars.

But on the morning when the queen fainted away, where was the magic fish-bone? Why, there it was in the Princess Alicia's pocket! She had almost taken it out to bring the queen to life again, when she put it back, and looked for the smelling-bottle.

After the queen had come out of her swoon that morning, and was dozing, the Princess Alicia hurried upstairs to tell a most particular secret to a most particularly confidential friend of hers, who was a duchess. People did suppose her to be a doll; but she was really a duchess, though nobody knew it except the princess.

This most particular secret was the secret about the magic fish-bone, the history of which was well known to the duchess, because the princess told her everything. The princess kneeled

down by the bed on which the duchess was lying, full-dressed and wide awake, and whispered the secret to her. The duchess smiled and nodded. People might have supposed that she never smiled and nodded; but she often did, though nobody knew it except the princess.

Then the Princess Alicia hurried downstairs again, to keep watch in the queen's room. She often kept watch by herself in the queen's room; but every evening, while the illness lasted, she sat there watching with the king. And every evening the king sat looking at her with a cross look, wondering why she never brought out the magic fish-bone. As often as she noticed this, she ran upstairs, whispered the secret to the duchess over again, and said to the duchess besides, 'They think we children never have a reason or a meaning!' And the duchess, though the most fashionable duchess that ever was heard of, winked her eye.

'Alicia,' said the king, one evening, when she wished him good-night.

'Yes, papa.'

'What is become of the magic fish-bone?'

'In my pocket, papa!'

'I thought you had lost it?'

'O, no, papa!'

'Or forgotten it?'

'No, indeed, papa.'

And so another time the dreadful little snapping pug-dog, next door, made a rush at one of the young princes as he stood on the steps coming home from school, and terrified him out of his wits; and he put his hand through a pane of glass, and bled, bled, bled. When the seventeen other young princes and princesses saw him bleed, bleed, bleed, they were terrified out of their wits too, and screamed themselves black in their seventeen faces all at once. But the Princess Alicia put her hands over all their seventeen mouths, one after another, and persuaded them to be quiet because of the sick queen. And then she put the wounded prince's hand in a basin of fresh cold water, while they stared with their twice seventeen are thirty-four, put down four and carry three, eyes, and then she looked in the hand for bits of glass, and there were fortunately no bits of glass there. And then she said to two

chubby-legged princes, who were sturdy though small, 'Bring me in the royal rag-bag: I must snip and stitch and cut and contrive.' So these two young princes tugged at the royal rag-bag, and lugged it in; and the Princess Alicia sat down on the floor, with a large pair of scissors and a needle and thread, and snipped and stitched and cut and contrived, and made a bandage, and put it on, and it fitted beautifully; and so when it was all done, she saw the king her papa looking on by the door.

'Alicia.'

'Yes, papa.'

'What have you been doing?'

'Snipping, stitching, cutting, and contriving, papa.'

'Where is the magic fish-bone?'

'In my pocket, papa.'

'I thought you had lost it?'

'O, no, papa.'

'Or forgotten it?'

'No, indeed, papa.'

After that, she ran upstairs to the duchess, and told her what had passed, and told her the secret over again; and the duchess shook her flaxen curls, and laughed with her rosy lips.

Well! and so another time the baby fell under the grate. The seventeen young princes and princesses were used to it; for they were almost always falling under the grate or down the stairs; but the baby was not used to it yet, and it gave him a swelled face and a black eye. The way the poor little darling came to tumble was, that he was out of the Princess Alicia's lap just as she was sitting, in a great coarse apron that quite smothered her, in front of the kitchen-fire, beginning to peel the turnips for the broth for dinner; and the way she came to be doing that was, that the king's cook had run away that morning with her own true love, who was a very tall but very tipsy soldier. Then the seventeen young princes and princesses, who cried at everything that happened, cried and roared. But the Princess Alicia (who couldn't help crying a little herself) quietly called to them to be still, on account of not throwing back the queen upstairs, who was fast getting well, and said, 'Hold your tongues, you wicked little monkeys, every one of you, while I examine baby!' Then she

examined baby, and found that he hadn't broken anything; and she held cold iron to his poor dear eye, and smoothed his poor dear face, and he presently fell asleep in her arms. Then she said to the seventeen princes and princesses, 'I am afraid to let him down yet, lest he should wake and feel pain; be good, and you shall all be cooks.' They jumped for joy when they heard that, and began making themselves cooks' caps out of old newspapers. So to one she gave the salt-box, and to one she gave the barley, and to one she gave the herbs, and to one she gave the turnips, and to one she gave the carrots, and to one she gave the onions, and to one she gave the spice-box, till they were all cooks, and all running about at work, she sitting in the middle, smothered in the great coarse apron, nursing baby. By and by the broth was done; and the baby woke up, smiling like an angel, and was trusted to the sedatest princess to hold, while the other princes and princesses were squeezed into a far-off corner to look at the Princess Alicia turning out the saucepanful of broth, for fear (as they were always getting into trouble) they should get splashed and scalded. When the broth came tumbling out, steaming beautifully and smelling like a nosegay good to eat, they clapped their hands. That made the baby clap his hands; and that, and his looking as if he had a comic toothache, made all the princes and princesses laugh. So the Princess Alicia said, 'Laugh and be good; and after dinner we will make him a nest on the floor in a corner, and he shall sit in his nest and see a dance of eighteen cooks.' That delighted the young princes and princesses, and they ate up all the broth, and washed up all the plates and dishes, and cleared away, and pushed the table into a corner; and then they in their cooks' caps, and the Princess Alicia in the smothering coarse apron that belonged to the cook that had run away with her own true love that was the very tall but very tipsy soldier, danced a dance of eighteen cooks before the angelic baby, who forget his swelled face and his black eye, and crowed with joy.

And so then, once more the Princess Alicia saw King Watkins the First, her father, standing in the doorway looking on, and he said, 'What have you been doing, Alicia?'

'Cooking and contriving, papa.'

'What else have you been doing, Alicia?'

'Keeping the children light-hearted, papa.'

'Where is the magic fish-bone, Alicia?'

'In my pocket, papa.'

'I thought you had lost it?'

'O, no, papa!'

'Or forgotten it?'

'No, indeed, papa.'

The king then sighed so heavily, and seemed so low-spirited, and sat down so miserably, leaning his head upon his hand, and his elbow upon the kitchen-table pushed away in the corner, that the seventeen princes and princesses crept softly out of the kitchen, and left him alone with the Princess Alicia and the angelic baby.

'What is the matter, papa?'

'I am dreadfully poor, my child.'

'Have you no money at all, papa?'

'None, my child.'

'Is there no way of getting any, papa?'

'No way,' said the king. 'I have tried very hard, and I have tried all ways.'

When she heard those last words, the Princess Alicia began to put her hand into the pocket where she kept the magic fish-bone.

'Papa,' said she, 'when we have tried very hard, and tried all ways, we must have done our very, very best?'

'No doubt, Alicia.'

'When we have done our very, very best, papa, and that is not enough, then I think the right time must have come for asking help of others.' This was the very secret connected with the magic fish-bone, which she had found out for herself from the good Fairy Grandmarina's words, and which she had so often whispered to her beautiful and fashionable friend, the duchess.

So she took out of her pocket the magic fish-bone, that had been dried and rubbed and polished till it shone like mother-of pearl; and she gave it one little kiss, and wished it was quarter-day. And immediately it *was* quarter-day; and the king's quarter's salary came rattling down the chimney, and bounced into the middle of the floor.

But this was not half of what happened—no, not a quarter; for

immediately afterwards the good Fairy Grandmarina came riding in, in a carriage and four (peacocks), with Mr. Pickles's boy up behind, dressed in silver and gold, with a cocked hat, powdered hair, pink silk stockings, a jewelled cane, and a nosegay. Down jumped Mr. Pickles's boy, with his cocked hat in his hand, and wonderfully polite (being entirely changed by enchantment), and handed Grandmarina out; and there she stood, in her rich shot-silk smelling of dried lavender, fanning herself with a sparkling fan.

'Alicia, my dear,' said this charming old fairy, 'how do you do? I hope I see you pretty well? Give me a kiss.'

The Princess Alicia embraced her; and then Grandmarina turned to the king, and said rather sharply, 'Are you good?'

The king said he hoped so.

'I suppose you know the reason *now*, why my god-daughter here,' kissing the princess again, 'did not apply to the fish-bone sooner?' said the fairy.

The king made a shy bow.

'Ah! but you didn't *then?*' said the fairy.

The king made a shyer bow.

'Any more reasons to ask for?' said the fairy.

The king said, No, and he was very sorry.

'Be good, then,' said the fairy, 'and live happy ever afterwards.'

Then Grandmarina waved her fan, and the queen came in most splendidly dressed; and the seventeen young princes and princesses, no longer grown out of their clothes, came in, newly fitted out from top to toe, with tucks in everything to admit of its being let out. After that, the fairy tapped the Princess Alicia with her fan; and the smothering coarse apron flew away, and she appeared exquisitely dressed, like a little bride, with a wreath of orange-flowers and a silver veil. After that, the kitchen dresser changed of itself into a wardrobe, made of beautiful woods and gold and looking-glass, which was full of dresses of all sorts, all for her and all exactly fitting her. After that, the angelic baby came in, running alone, with his face and eye not a bit the worse, but much the better. Then Grandmarina begged to be introduced to the duchess; and when the duchess was brought down, many compliments passed between them.

A little whispering took place between the fairy and the duchess; and then the fairy said out loud, 'Yes, I thought she would have told you.' Grandmarina then turned to the king and queen, and said, 'We are going in search of Prince Certainpersonio. The pleasure of your company is requested at church in half an hour precisely.' So she and the Princess Alicia got into the carriage; and Mr. Pickles's boy handed in the duchess, who sat by herself on the opposite seat; and then Mr. Pickles's boy put up the steps and got up behind, and the peacocks flew away with their tails behind.

Prince Certainpersonio was sitting by himself, eating barley-sugar, and waiting to be ninety. When he saw the peacocks, followed by the carriage, coming in at the window, it immediately occurred to him that something uncommon was going to happen.

'Prince,' said Grandmarina, 'I bring you your bride.'

The moment the fairy said those words, Prince Certainpersonio's face left off being sticky, and his jacket and corduroys changed to peach-bloom velvet, and his hair curled, and a cap and feather flew in like a bird and settled on his head. He got into the carriage by the fairy's invitation; and there he renewed his acquaintance with the duchess, whom he had seen before.

In the church were the prince's relations and friends, and the Princess Alicia's relations and friends, and the seventeen princes and princesses, and the baby, and a crowd of the neighbours. The marriage was beautiful beyond expression. The duchess was bridesmaid, and beheld the ceremony from the pulpit, where she was supported by the cushion of the desk.

Grandmarina gave a magnificent wedding-feast afterwards, in which there was everything and more to eat, and everything and more to drink. The wedding-cake was delicately ornamented with white satin ribbons, frosted silver, and white lilies, and was forty-two yards round.

When Grandmarina had drunk her love to the young couple, and Prince Certainpersonio had made a speech, and everybody had cried, Hip, hip, hip, hurrah! Grandmarina announced to the king and queen that in future there would be eight quarter-days in every year, except in leap-year, when there would be ten. She then turned to Certainpersonio and Alicia, and said, 'My dears,

you will have thirty-five children, and they will all be good and beautiful. Seventeen of your children will be boys, and eighteen will be girls. The hair of the whole of your children will curl naturally. They will never have the measles, and will have recovered from the whooping-cough before being born.'

On hearing such good news, everybody cried out 'Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' again.

'It only remains,' said Grandmarina in conclusion, 'to make an end of the fishbone.'

So she took it from the hand of the Princess Alicia, and it instantly flew down the throat of the dreadful little snapping pug-dog, next door, and choked him, and he expired in convulsions.

PART III

ROMANCE. FROM THE PEN OF LIEUT.-COL. ROBIN REDFORTH [1]

THE subject of our present narrative would appear to have devoted himself to the pirate profession at a comparatively early age. We find him in command of a splendid schooner of one hundred guns loaded to the muzzle, ere yet he had had a party in honour of his tenth birthday.

It seems that our hero, considering himself spited by a Latin-grammar master, demanded the satisfaction due from one man of honour to another. Not getting it, he privately withdrew his haughty spirit from such low company, bought a second-hand pocket pistol, folded up some sandwiches in a paper bag, and made a bottle of Spanish liquorice-water, and entered on a career of valour.

It were tedious to follow Boldheart (for such was his name) through the commencing stages of his story. Suffice it, that we find him bearing the rank of Capt. Boldheart, reclining in full uniform on a crimson hearth-rug spread out upon the quarter-deck of his schooner 'The Beauty,' in the China seas. It was a

[1] Aged nine.

lovely evening; and, as his crew lay grouped about him, he favoured them with the following melody:

O landsmen are folly!
O pirates are jolly!
O diddleum Dolly,
Di.
Chorus.—Heave yo.

The soothing effect of these animated sounds floating over the waters, as the common sailors united their rough voices to take up the rich tones of Boldheart, may be more easily conceived than described.

It was under these circumstances that the look-out at the mast-head gave the word, 'Whales!'

All was now activity.

'Where away?' cried Capt. Boldheart, starting up.

'On the larboard bow, sir,' replied the fellow at the mast-head, touching his hat. For such was the height of discipline on board of 'The Beauty,' that, even at that height, he was obliged to mind it, or be shot through the head.

'This adventure belongs to me,' said Boldheart. 'Boy, my harpoon. Let no man follow'; and leaping alone into his boat, the captain rowed with admirable dexterity in the direction of the monster.

All was now excitement.

'He nears him!' said an elderly seaman, following the captain through his spy-glass.

'He strikes him!' said another seaman, a mere stripling, but also with a spy-glass.

'He tows him towards us!' said another seaman, a man in the full vigour of life, but also with a spy-glass.

In fact the captain was seen approaching, with the huge bulk following. We will not dwell on the deafening cries of 'Boldheart! Boldheart!' with which he was received, when, carelessly leaping on the quarter-deck, he presented his prize to his men. They afterwards made two thousand four hundred and seventeen pound ten and sixpence by it.

Ordering the sails to be braced up, the captain now stood W.N.W. 'The Beauty' flew rather than floated over the dark blue

waters. Nothing particular occurred for a fortnight, except taking, with considerable slaughter, four Spanish galleons, and a snow from South America, all richly laden. Inaction began to tell upon the spirits of the men. Capt. Boldheart called all hands aft, and said, 'My lads, I hear there are discontented ones among ye. Let any such stand forth.'

After some murmering, in which the expressions, 'Ay, ay, sir!' 'Union Jack,' 'Avast,' 'Starboard,' 'Port,' 'Bowsprit,' and similar indications of a mutinous under-current, though subdued, were audible, Bill Boozey, captain of the foretop, came out from the rest. His form was that of a giant, but he quailed under the captain's eye.

'What are your wrongs?' said the captain.

'Why, d' ye see, Capt. Boldheart,' replied the towering mariner, 'I 've sailed, man and boy, for many a year, but I never yet know'd the milk served out for the ship's company's teas to be as sour as 'tis aboard this craft.'

At this moment the thrilling cry, 'Man overboard!' announced to the astonished crew that Boozey, in stepping back, as the captain (in mere thoughtfulness) laid his hand upon the faithful pocket-pistol which he wore in his belt, had lost his balance, and was struggling with the foaming tide.

All was now stupefaction.

But with Capt. Boldheart, to throw off his uniform coat, regardless of the various rich orders with which it was decorated, and to plunge into the sea after the drowning giant, was the work of a moment. Maddening was the excitement when boats were lowered; intense the joy when the captain was seen holding up the drowning man with his teeth; deafening the cheering when both were restored to the main deck of 'The Beauty.' And, from the instant of his changing his wet clothes for dry ones, Capt. Boldheart had no such devoted though humble friend as William Boozey.

Boldheart now pointed to the horizon, and called the attention of his crew to the taper spars of a ship lying snug in harbour under the guns of a fort.

'She shall be ours at sunrise,' said he. 'Serve out a double allowance of grog, and prepare for action.'

All was now preparation.

When morning dawned, after a sleepless night, it was seen that the stranger was crowding on all sail to come out of the harbour and offer battle. As the two ships came nearer to each other, the stranger fired a gun and hoisted Roman colours. Boldheart then perceived her to be the Latin-grammar master's bark. Such indeed she was, and had been tacking about the world in unavailing pursuit from the time of his first taking to a roving life.

Boldheart now addressed his men, promising to blow them up if he should feel convinced that their reputation required it, and giving orders that the Latin-grammar master should be taken alive. He then dismissed them to their quarters, and the fight began with a broadside from 'The Beauty.' She then veered around, and poured in another. 'The Scorpion' (so was the bark of the Latin-grammar master appropriately called) was not slow to return her fire; and a terrific cannonading ensued, in which the guns of 'The Beauty' did tremendous execution.

The Latin-grammar master was seen upon the poop, in the midst of the smoke and fire, encouraging his men. To do him justice, he was no craven, though his white hat, his short gray trousers, and his long snuff-coloured surtout reaching to his heels (the self-same coat in which he had spited Boldheart), contrasted most unfavourably with the brilliant uniform of the latter. At this moment, Boldheart, seizing a pike and putting himself at the head of his men, gave the word to board.

A desperate conflict ensued in the hammock-nettings, or somewhere in about that direction,—until the Latin-grammar master, having all his masts gone, his hull and rigging shot through, and seeing Boldheart slashing a path towards him, hauled down his flag himself, gave up his sword to Boldheart, and asked for quarter. Scarce had he been put into the captain's boat, ere 'The Scorpion' went down with all on board.

On Capt. Boldheart's now assembling his men, a circumstance occurred. He found it necessary with one blow of his cutlass, to kill the cook, who, having lost his brother in the late action, was making at the Latin-grammar master in an infuriated state, intent on his destruction with a carving-knife.

Capt. Boldheart then turned to the Latin-grammar master, se-

verely reproaching him with his perfidy and put it to his crew what they considered that a master who spited a boy deserved.

They answered with one voice, 'Death.'

'It may be so,' said the captain; 'but it shall never be said that Boldheart stained his hour of triumph with the blood of his enemy. Prepare the cutter.'

The cutter was immediately prepared.

'Without taking your life,' said the captain, 'I must yet for ever deprive you of the power of spiting other boys. I shall turn you adrift in this boat. You will find in her two oars, a compass, a bottle of rum, a small cask of water, a piece of pork, a bag of biscuit, and my Latin grammar. Go! and spite the natives, if you can find any.'

Deeply conscious of this bitter sarcasm, the unhappy wretch was put into the cutter, and was soon left far behind. He made no effort to row, but was seen lying on his back with his legs up, when last made out by the ship's telescopes.

A stiff breeze now beginning to blow, Capt. Boldheart gave orders to keep her S.S.W., easing her a little during the night by falling off a point or two W. by W., or even by W. S., if she complained much. He then retired for the night, having in truth much need of repose. In addition to the fatigues he had undergone, this grave officer had received sixteen wounds in the engagement, but had not mentioned it.

In the morning a white squall came on, and was succeeded by other squalls of various colours. It thundered and lightened heavily for six weeks. Hurricanes then set in for two months. Waterspouts and tornadoes followed. The oldest sailor on board —and he was a very old one—had never seen such weather. 'The Beauty' lost all idea where she was, and the carpenter reported six feet two of water in the hold. Everybody fell senseless at the pumps every day.

Provisions now ran very low. Our hero put the crew on short allowance, and put himself on shorter allowance than any man in the ship. But his spirit kept him fat. In this extremity, the gratitude of Boozey, the captain of the foretop, whom our readers may remember, was truly affecting. The loving though lowly William

repeatedly requested to be killed, and preserved for the captain's table.

We now approach a change of affairs.

One day during a gleam of sunshine, and when the weather had moderated, the man at the mast-head—too weak now to touch his hat, besides its having been blown away—called out,

'Savages!'

All was now expectation.

Presently fifteen hundred canoes, each paddled by twenty savages, were seen advancing in excellent order. They were of a light green colour (the savages were), and sang, with great energy, the following strain:

Choo a choo a choo tooth,
Muntch, muntch. Nycey!
Choo a choo a choo tooth,
Muntch, muntch. Nicey!

As the shades of night were by this time closing in, these expressions were supposed to embody this simple people's views of the evening hymn. But it too soon appeared that the song was a translation of 'For what we are going to receive,' etc.

The chief, imposingly decorated with feathers of lively colours, and having the majestic appearance of a fighting parrot, no sooner understood (he understood English perfectly) that the ship was 'The Beauty,' Capt. Boldheart, than he fell upon his face on the deck, and could not be persuaded to rise until the captain had lifted him up, and told him he wouldn't hurt him. All the rest of the savages also fell on their faces with marks of terror, and had also to be lifted up one by one. Thus the fame of the great Boldheart had gone before him, even among these children of Nature.

Turtles and oysters were now produced in astonishing numbers; and on these and yams the people made a hearty meal. After dinner the chief told Capt. Boldheart that there was better feeding up at the village, and that he would be glad to take him and his officers there. Apprehensive of treachery, Boldheart ordered his boat's crew to attend him completely armed. And well were it for other commanders if their precautions—but let us not anticipate.

When the canoes arrived at the beach, the darkness of the night was illumined by the light of an immense fire. Ordering his boat's

crew (with the intrepid though illiterate William at their head) to keep close and be upon their guard, Boldheart bravely went on, arm in arm with the chief.

But how to depict the captain's surprise when he found a ring of savages singing in chorus that barbarous translation of 'For what we are going to receive,' etc., which has been given above, and dancing hand in hand round the Latin-grammar master, in a hamper with his head shaved, while two savages floured him, before putting him to the fire to be cooked!

Boldheart now took counsel with his officers on the course to be adopted. In the meantime the miserable captive never ceased begging pardon and imploring to be delivered. On the generous Boldheart's proposal it was at length resolved that he should not be cooked but should be allowed to remain raw on two conditions namely:

1. That he should never, under any circumstances presume to teach any boy anything any more.

2. That if taken back to England. he should pass his life in travelling to find out boys who wanted their exercises done, and should do their exercises for those boys for nothing, and never say a word about it.

Drawing the sword from its sheath, Boldheart swore him to these conditions on its shining blade. The prisoner wept bitterly, and appeared acutely to feel the errors of his past career.

The captain then ordered his boat's crew to make ready for a volley, and after firing to reload quickly. 'And expect a score or two on ye to go head over heels,' murmured William Boozey; 'for I 'm a-looking at ye.' With those words, the derisive though deadly William took a good aim.

'Fire!'

The ringing voice of Boldheart was lost in the report of the guns and the screeching of the savages. Volley after volley awakened the numerous echoes. Hundreds of savages were killed, hundreds wounded, and thousands ran howling into the woods. The Latin-grammar master had a spare night-cap lent him, and a long-tail coat, which he wore hind side before. He presented a ludicrous though pitiable appearance, and serve him right.

We now find Capt. Boldheart, with this rescued wretch on

board, standing off for other islands. At one of these, not a cannibal island, but a pork and vegetable one, he married (only in fun on his part) the king's daughter. Here he rested some time, receiving from the natives great quantities of precious stones, gold dust, elephants' teeth, and sandal wood, and getting very rich. This, too, though he almost every day made presents of enormous value to his men.

The ship being at length as full as she could hold of all sorts of valuable things, Boldheart gave orders to weigh the anchor, and turn 'The Beauty's' head towards England. These orders were obeyed with three cheers; and ere the sun went down full many a hornpipe had been danced on deck by the uncouth though agile William.

We next find Capt. Boldheart, about three leagues off Madeira, surveying through his spy-glass a stranger of suspicious appearance making sail towards him. On his firing a gun ahead of her to bring her to, she ran up a flag, which he instantly recognised as the flag from the mast in the back-garden at home.

Inferring from this, that his father had put to sea to seek his long-lost son, the captain sent his own boat on board the stranger to inquire if this was so, and, if so, whether his father's intentions were strictly honourable. The boat came back with a present of greens and fresh meat, and reported that the stranger was 'The Family,' of twelve hundred tons, and had not only the captain's father on board, but also his mother, with the majority of his aunts and uncles, and all his cousins. It was further reported to Boldheart that the whole of these relations had expressed themselves in a becoming manner, and were anxious to embrace him and thank him for the glorious credit he had done them. Boldheart at once invited them to breakfast next morning on board 'The Beauty,' and gave orders for a brilliant ball that should last all day.

It was in the course of the night that the captain discovered the hoplessness of reclaiming the Latin-grammar master. That thankless traitor was found out, as the two ships lay near each other, communicating with 'The Family' by signals, and offering to give up Boldheart. He was hanged at the yard-arm the first

thing in the morning, after having it impressively pointed out to him by Boldheart that this was what spiters came to.

The meeting between the captain and his parents was attended with tears. His uncles and aunts would have attended their meeting with tears too, but he wasn't going to stand that. His cousins were very much astonished by the size of his ship and the discipline of his men, and were greatly overcome by the splendour of his uniform. He kindly conducted them round the vessel, and pointed out everything worthy of notice. He also fired his hundred guns, and found it amusing to witness their alarm.

The entertainment surpassed everything ever seen on board ship, and lasted from ten in the morning until seven the next morning. Only one disagreeable incident occurred. Capt. Boldheart found himself obliged to put his cousin Tom in irons, for being disrespectful. On the boy's promising amendment, however, he was humanely released after a few hours' close confinement.

Boldheart now took his mother down into the great cabin, and asked after the young lady with whom, it was well known to the world, he was in love. His mother replied that the object of his affections was then at school at Margate, for the benefit of sea-bathing (it was the month of September), but that she feared the young lady's friends were still opposed to the union. Boldheart at once resolved, if necessary, to bombard the town.

Taking the command of his ship with this intention, and putting all but fighting men on board 'The Family,' with orders to that vessel to keep in company, Boldheart soon anchored in Margate Roads. Here he went ashore well-armed, and attended by his boat's crew (at their head the faithful though ferocious William), and demanded to see the mayor, who came out of his office.

'Dost know the name of yon ship, mayor?' asked Boldheart fiercely.

'No,' said the mayor, rubbing his eyes, which he could scarce believe, when he saw the goodly vessel riding at anchor.

'She is named "The Beauty," ' said the captain.

'Hah!' exclaimed the mayor, with a start. 'And you, then, are Capt. Boldheart?'

'The same.'

A pause ensued. The mayor trembled.

'Now, mayor,' said the captain, 'choose! Help me to my bride, or be bombarded.'

The mayor begged for two hours' grace, in which to make inquiries respecting the young lady. Boldheart accorded him but one; and during that one placed William Boozey sentry over him, with a drawn sword, and instructions to accompany him wherever he went, and to run him through the body if he showed a sign of playing false.

At the end of the hour the mayor re-appeared more dead than alive, closely waited on by Boozey more alive than dead.

'Captain,' said the mayor, 'I have ascertained that the young lady is going to bathe. Even now she waits her turn for a machine. The tide is low, though rising. I, in one of our town-boats, shall not be suspected. When she comes forth in her bathing-dress into the shallow water from behind the hood of the machine, my boat shall intercept her and prevent her return. Do you the rest.'

'Mayor,' returned Capt. Boldheart, 'thou hast saved thy town.'

The captain then signalled his boat to take him off, and, steering her himself, ordered her crew to row towards the bathing-ground, and there to rest upon their oars. All happened as had been arranged. His lovely bride came forth, the mayor glided in behind her, she became confused, and had floated out of her depth, when, with one skilful touch of the rudder and one quivering stroke from the boat's crew, her adoring Boldheart held her in his strong arms. There her shrieks of terror were changed to cries of joy.

Before 'The Beauty' could get under way the hoisting of all the flags in the town and harbour, and the ringing of all the bells, announced to the brave Boldheart that he had nothing to fear. He therefore determined to be married on the spot, and signalled for a clergyman and clerk, who came off promptly in a sailing-boat named 'The Skylark.' Another great entertainment was then given on board 'The Beauty,' in the midst of which the mayor was called out by a messenger. He returned with the news that government had sent down to know whether Capt. Boldheart, in acknowledgment of the great services he had done his country by

being a pirate, would consent to be made a lieutenant-colonel. For himself he would have spurned the worthless boon; but his bride wished it, and he consented.

Only one thing further happened before the good ship 'Family' was dismissed, with rich presents to all on board. It is painful to record (but such is human nature in some cousins) that Capt. Boldheart's unmannerly Cousin Tom was actually tied up to receive three dozen with a rope's end 'for cheekiness and making game,' when Capt. Boldheart's lady begged for him, and he was spared. 'The Beauty' then refitted, and the captain and his bride departed for the Indian Ocean to enjoy themselves for evermore.

PART IV

ROMANCE. FROM THE PEN OF MISS NETTIE ASHFORD [1]

THERE is a country which I will show you when I get into maps, where the children have everything their own way. It is a most delightful country to live in. The grown-up people are obliged to obey the children, and are never allowed to sit up to supper, except on their birthdays. The children order them to make jam and jelly and marmalade, and tarts and pies and puddings, and all manner of pastry. If they say they won't, they are put in the corner till they do. They are sometimes allowed to have some; but when they have some, they generally have powders given them afterwards.

One of the inhabitants of this country, a truly sweet young creature of the name of Mrs. Orange, had the misfortune to be sadly plagued by her numerous family. Her parents required a great deal of looking after, and they had connections and companions who were scarcely ever out of mischief. So Mrs. Orange said to herself, 'I really cannot be troubled with these torments any longer: I must put them all to school.'

Mrs. Orange took off her pinafore, and dressed herself very nicely, and took up her baby, and went out to call upon another

[1] Aged half-past six.

lady of the name of Mrs. Lemon, who kept a preparatory establishment. Mrs. Orange stood upon the scraper to pull at the bell, and give a ring-ting-ting.

Mrs. Lemon's neat little housemaid, pulling up her socks as she came along the passage, answered the Ring-ting-ting.

'Good-morning,' said Mrs. Orange. 'Fine day. How do you do? Mrs. Lemon at home?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Will you say Mrs. Orange and baby?'

'Yes, ma'am. Walk in.'

Mrs. Orange's baby was a very fine one, and real wax all over. Mrs. Lemon's baby was leather and bran. However, when Mrs. Lemon came into the drawing-room with her baby in her arms, Mrs. Orange said politely, 'Good-morning. Fine day. How do you do? And how is little Tootleum-boots?'

'Well, she is but poorly. Cutting her teeth, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon.

'O indeed ma'am!' said Mrs. Orange. 'No fits, I hope?'

'No, ma'am.'

'How many teeth has she, ma'am?'

'Five, ma'am.'

'My Emilia, ma'am, has eight,' said Mrs. Orange. 'Shall we lay them on the mantelpiece side by side, while we converse?'

'By all means, ma'am' said Mrs. Lemon. 'Hem!'

'The first question is, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange, 'I don't bore you?'

'Not in the least, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon. 'Far from it, I assure you.'

'Then pray *have* you,' said Mrs. Orange,—'*have* you any vacancies?'

'Yes, ma'am. How many might you require?'

'Why, the truth is, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange, 'I have come to the conclusion that my children,'—O, I forgot to say that they call the grown-up people children in that country!—'that my children are getting positively too much for me. Let me see. Two parents, two intimate friends of theirs, one godfather, two godmothers, and an aunt. *Have* you as many as eight vacancies?'

'I have just eight, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon.

'Most fortunate! Terms moderate, I think?'

'Very moderate, ma'am.'

'Diet good, I believe?'

'Excellent ma'am.'

'Unlimited?'

'Unlimited.'

'Most satisfactory! Corporal punishment dispensed with?'

'Why, we do occasionally shake,' said Mrs. Lemon, 'and we have slapped. But only in extreme cases.'

'*Could* I, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange,—'*could* I see the establishment?'

'With the greatest of pleasure, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon.

Mrs. Lemon took Mrs. Orange into the school-room, where there were a number of pupils. 'Stand up, children,' said Mrs. Lemon; and they all stood up.

Mrs. Orange whispered to Mrs. Lemon. 'There is a pale, bald child with red whiskers in disgrace. Might I ask what he has done?'

'Come here White,' said Mrs. Lemon, 'and tell this lady what you have been doing.'

'Betting on horses,' said White sulkily.

'Are you sorry for it, you naughty child?' said Mrs. Lemon.

'No,' said White. 'Sorry to lose, but shouldn't be sorry to win.'

'There 's a vicious boy for you, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon. 'Go along with you, sir. This is Brown, Mrs. Orange. O, a sad case, Brown's! Never knows when he has had enough. Greedy. How is your gout, sir?'

'Bad,' said Brown.

'What else can you expect?' said Mrs. Lemon. 'Your stomach is the size of two. Go and take exercise directly. Mrs. Black, come here to me. Now, here is a child, Mrs. Orange, ma'am, who is always at play. She can't be kept at home a single day together; always gadding about and spoiling her clothes. Play, play, play, play, from morning to night, and to morning again. How can she expect to improve?'

'Don't expect to improve,' sulked Mrs. Black. 'Don't want to.'

'There is a specimen of her temper, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon.

'To see her when she is tearing about, neglecting everything else you would suppose her to be at least good-humoured. But bless you! ma'am, she is as pert and flouncing a minx as ever you met with in all your days!'

'You must have a great deal of trouble with them ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange.

'Ah, I have, indeed, ma'am!' said Mrs. Lemon. 'What with their tempers, what with their quarrels, what with their never knowing what 's good for them, and what with their always wanting to domineer, deliver me from these unreasonable children!'

'Well, I wish you good-morning, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange.

'Well, I wish you good-morning, ma'am,' said Mrs. Lemon.

So Mrs. Orange took up her baby and went home, and told the family that plagued her so that they were all going to be sent to school. They said they didn't want to go to school; but she packed up their boxes, and packed them off.

'O dear me, dear me! Rest and be thankful!' said Mrs. Orange, throwing herself back in her little arm-chair. 'Those troublesome troubles are got rid of, please the pigs!'

Just then another lady, named Mrs. Alicumpaine, came calling at the street-door with a ring-ting-ting.

'My dear Mrs. Alicumpaine,' said Mrs. Orange, 'how do you do? Pray stay to dinner. We have but a simple joint of sweetstuff, followed by a plain dish of bread and treacle; but, if you will take us as you find us, it will be *so* kind!'

'Don't mention it,' said Mrs. Alicumpaine. 'I shall be too glad. But what do you think I have come for, ma'am? Guess, ma'am.'

'I really cannot guess, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange.

'Why, I am going to have a small juvenile party to-night,' said Mrs. Alicumpaine; 'and if you and Mr. Orange and baby would but join us, we should be complete.'

'More than charmed, I am sure!' said Mrs. Orange.

'So kind of you!' said Mrs. Alicumpaine. 'But I hope the children won't bore you?'

'Dear things! Not at all,' said Mrs. Orange. 'I dote upon them.'

Mr. Orange here came home from the city; and he came, too, with a ring-ting-ting.

'James love,' said Mrs. Orange, 'you look tired. What has been doing in the city to-day?'

'Trap bat, and ball, my dear,' said Mr. Orange; 'and it knocks a man up.'

'That dreadfully anxious city, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange to Mrs. Alicumpaine; 'so wearing, is it not?'

'O so trying!' said Mrs. Alicumpaine. 'John has lately been speculating in the peg-top ring; and I often say to him at night, "John, *is* the result worth the wear and tear?" '

Dinner was ready by this time: so they sat down to dinner; and while Mr. Orange carved the joint of sweet-stuff, he said, 'It 's a poor heart that never rejoices. Jane, go down to the cellar, and fetch a bottle of the Upest ginger-beer.'

At tea-time, Mr. and Mrs. Orange, and baby, and Mrs. Alicumpaine went off to Mrs. Alicumpaine's house The children had not come yet; but the ball-room was ready for them, decorated with paper flowers.

'How very sweet!' said Mrs. Orange. 'The dear things! How pleased they will be!'

'I don't care for children myself,' said Mr. Orange, gaping.

'Not for girls?' said Mrs. Alicumpaine. 'Come! you care for girls?'

Mr. Orange shook his head, and gaped again. 'Frivolous and vain, ma'am.'

'My dear James,' cried Mrs. Orange, who had been peeping about, 'do look here. Here's the supper for the darlings, ready laid in the room behind the folding-doors. Here's their little pickled salmon, I do declare! And here's their little salad, and their little roast beef and fowls, and their little pastry, and their wee, wee, wee champagne!'

'Yes, I thought it best, ma'am,' said Mrs. Alicumpaine, 'that they should have their supper by themselves. Our table is in the corner here, where the gentlemen can have their wineglass of negus, and their egg-sandwich, and their quiet game at beggar-my-neighbour, and look on. As for us, ma'am, we shall have quite enough to do to manage the company.'

'O, indeed, you may say so! Quite enough, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange.

The company began to come. The first of them was a stout boy, with a white top-knot and spectacles. The housemaid brought him in and said, 'Compliments, and at what time was he to be fetched!' Mrs. Alicumpaine said, 'Not a moment later than ten. How do you do, sir? Go and sit down.' Then a number of other children came; boys by themselves, and girls by themselves, and boys and girls together. They didn't behave at all well. Some of them looked through quizzing-glasses at others, and said, 'Who are those? Don't know them.' Some of them looked through quizzing-glasses at others, and said, 'How do?' Some of them had cups of tea or coffee handed to them by others, and said, 'Thanks; much!' A good many boys stood about, and felt their shirt collars. Four tiresome fat boys *would* stand in the doorway, and talk about the newspapers, till Mrs. Alicumpaine went to them and said, 'My dears, I really cannot allow you to prevent people from coming in. I shall be truly sorry to do it; but, if you put yourselves in everybody's way, I must positively send you home.' One boy, with a beard and a large white waistcoat, who stood straddling on the hearthrug warming his coat-tails, *was* sent home. 'Highly incorrect, my dear,' said Mrs. Alicumpaine, handing him out of the room, 'and I cannot permit it.'

There was a children's band,—harp, cornet, and piano,—and Mrs. Alicumpaine and Mrs. Orange bustled among the children to persuade them to take partners and dance. But they were so obstinate! For quite a long time they would not be persuaded to take partners and dance. Most of the boys said, 'Thanks; much! But not at present.' And most of the rest of the boys said, 'Thanks; much! But never do.'

'O, these children are very wearing!' said Mrs. Alicumpaine to Mrs. Orange.

'Dear things! I dote upon them; but they ARE wearing,' said Mrs. Orange to Mrs. Alicumpaine.

At last they did begin in a slow and melancholy way to slide about to music; though even then they wouldn't mind what they were told, but would have this partner, and wouldn't have that

partner, and showed temper about it. And they wouldn't smile,—no, not on any account they wouldn't; but, when the music stopped, went round and round the room in dismal twos, as if everybody else was dead.

'O, it's very hard indeed to get these vexing children to be entertained!' said Mrs. Alicumpaine to Mrs. Orange.

'I dote upon the darlings; but it is hard,' said Mrs. Orange to Mrs. Alicumpaine.

They were trying children, that's the truth. First, they wouldn't sing when they were asked; and then, when everybody fully believed they wouldn't, they would. 'If you serve us so any more, my love,' said Mrs. Alicumpaine to a tall child, with a good deal of white back, in mauve silk trimmed with lace, 'it will be my painful privilege to offer you a bed, and to send you to it immediately.'

The girls were so ridiculously dressed, too, that they were in rags before supper. How could the boys help treading on their trains? And yet when their trains were trodden on, they often showed temper again, and looked as black, they did! However, they all seemed to be pleased when Mrs. Alicumpaine said, 'Supper is ready, children!' And they went crowding and pushing in, as if they had had dry bread for dinner.

'How are the children getting on?' said Mr. Orange to Mrs. Orange, when Mrs. Orange came to look after baby. Mrs. Orange had left baby on a shelf near Mr. Orange while he played at beggar-my-neighbour, and had asked him to keep his eye upon her now and then.

'Most charmingly, my dear!' said Mrs. Orange, 'So droll to see their little flirtations and jealousies! Do come and look!'

'Much obliged to you, my dear,' said Mr. Orange; 'but I don't care about children myself.'

So Mrs. Orange, having seen that baby was safe, went back without Mr. Orange to the room where the children were having supper.

'What are they doing now?' said Mrs. Orange to Mrs. Alicumpaine.

'They are making speeches, and playing at parliament,' said Mrs. Alicumpaine to Mrs. Orange.

On hearing this, Mrs. Orange set off once more back again to Mr. Orange, and said, 'James dear, do come. The children are playing at parliament.'

'Thank you, my dear,' said Mr. Orange, 'but I don't care about parliament myself.'

So Mrs. Orange went once again without Mr. Orange to the room where the children were having supper, to see them playing at parliament. And she found some of the boys crying, 'Hear, hear, hear!' while other boys cried 'No, no!' and others, 'Question!' 'Spoke!' and all sorts of nonsense that ever you heard. Then one of those tiresome fat boys who had stopped the doorway told them he was on his legs (as if they couldn't see that he wasn't on his head, or on his anything else) to explain, and that, with the permission of his honourable friend, if he would allow him to call him so (another tiresome boy bowed), he would proceed to explain. Then he went on for a long time in a sing-song (whatever he meant), did this troublesome fat boy, about that he held in his hand a glass; and about that he had come down to that house that night to discharge what he would call a public duty; and about that, on the present occasion, he would lay his hand (his other hand) upon his heart, and would tell honourable gentlemen that he was about to open the door to general approval. Then he opened the door by saying, 'To our hostess!' and everybody else said 'To our hostess!' and then there were cheers. Then another tiresome boy started up in sing-song, and then half a dozen noisy and nonsensical boys at once. But at last Mrs. Alicumpaine said, 'I cannot have this din. Now, children, you have played at parliament very nicely; but parliament gets tiresome after a little while, and it's time you let off, for you will soon be fetched.'

After another dance (with more tearing to rags than before supper), they began to be fetched; and you will be very glad to be told that the tiresome fat boy who had been on his legs was walked off first without any ceremony. When they were all gone, poor Mrs. Alicumpaine dropped upon a sofa, and said to Mrs. Orange, 'These children will be the death of me at last, ma'am,—they will indeed!'

'I quite adore them, ma'am,' said Mrs. Orange; 'but they DO want variety.'

Mr. Orange got his hat, and Mrs. Orange got her bonnet and her baby, and they set out to walk home. They had to pass Mrs. Lemon's preparatory establishment on their way.

'I wonder, James dear,' said Mrs. Orange, looking up at the window, 'whether the precious children are asleep!'

'I don't care much whether they are or not, myself,' said Mr. Orange.

'James dear!'

'You dote upon them, you know,' said Mr. Orange, 'That's another thing.'

'I do,' said Mrs. Orange rapturously. 'O, I DO!'

'I don't,' said Mr. Orange.

'But I was thinking, James love,' said Mrs. Orange, pressing his arm, 'whether our dear, good, kind Mrs. Lemon would like them to stay the holidays with her.'

'If she was paid for it, I daresay she would,' said Mr. Orange.

'I adore them, James,' said Mrs. Orange, 'but SUPPOSE we pay her, then!'

This was what brought that country to such perfection, and made it such a delightful place to live in. The grown-up people (that would be in other countries) soon left off being allowed any holidays after Mr. and Mrs. Orange tried the experiment; and the children (that would be in other countries) kept them at school as long as ever they lived, and made them do whatever they were told.

Bela Lugosi

Thursday, 26 August, 1937.